

# **THE BLACK BOOK OF PUSHBACKS**

## **Volume I**



**Border Violence Monitoring Network**

The Black Book of Pushbacks was produced by a group of independent experts from the Border Violence Monitoring Network and their partners. The BVMN is a horizontal, self-organised network of grassroots NGOs including Are You Syrious, Centre for Peace Studies, Collective Aid, Disinfaux Collective, Escuela con Alma, Fresh Response, InfoKolpa, Mobile Info Team, No Name Kitchen, [Re:]ports Sarajevo, Josoor, Mare Liberum and Rigardu. In addition to coordinated monitoring and reporting, these groups perform a huge spectrum of activities; from humanitarian relief, providing integration support and legal assistance, to advocacy work.

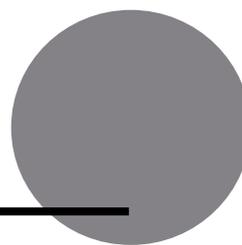
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# FOREWORD

In our work at the European Parliament, we have visited many places inside and outside the EU borders: Lampedusa, Lesvos, Calais, Ceuta, Melilla, Las Palmas, Edirne, Bihać, Preševo are just some of them. We went to all those places to get first hand impressions of what the failure of the EU's migration and asylum system as well as its border regime look like, and what that means for the people subjected to this failure, and to also find out how it could be done differently.



The clear lack of solidarity and humanity of EU's policies has been visible for years at EU's borders. In each of our visits, we always found children, women and men who were suffering. The people we met were terrified of what they had left behind and afraid of what was ahead of them. We heard many stories on the dangers of crossing a border – or several borders – into the EU. In the absence of safe and legal ways to come to the EU, the risks are enormous when trying to reach safety: possible shipwreck and drowning, or to be detained and then sent back, or even immediately pushed-back, kidnapped, raped, trafficked, or beaten up and abused by law enforcement authorities.



In recent years, the testimonies have become even more appalling: reports of violence have increased, as have the number of pushbacks. The types of violence that have been documented have changed, too. We have been so shocked by endless accounts of merciless, sadistic and degrading violence that are reminiscent of brutal dictatorships.



This book aims to bring these voices to the European institutions and governments and to hold them accountable for the tortures, the inhumane and degrading treatment, and the violation of the right-to-life that people seeking safety in the European Union are faced with. This book would not have been possible without all the activists and NGOs that have documented border violence, gathering testimonies and locations at the considerable risk of being arrested or criminalised by European governments. Many of them have also endured attacks for speaking out against the violence and pushbacks carried out by law enforcement authorities, and we would like to express our strongest and deepest support to them all. It is thanks to their relentless work that no one can be in any doubt, at the European level, that pushbacks and acts of violence are being perpetrated at the EU's external borders.



We hope that this book will lead to real action to end border violence, once and for all. Solutions to end border violence do exist, but the actual political will is lacking. This book underlines that we are not confronted by a few isolated incidents - but repeated offences. The testimonies gathered show that this is a systematic and organised practice for which responsible authorities should be held accountable.

From top: MEPs Cornelia Ernst, Clare Daly and Malin Björk raising photos from the BVMN database during the LIBE Committee meeting with the Croatian Minister of Interior Davor Božinović (bottom photo) on 27th January 2020. Photo: THE LEFT<sup>1</sup>

*Cornelia Ernst, Kostas Arvanitis, Fernando Barrena, Malin Björk, Clare Daly, Anne-Sophie Pelletier, Sira Rego & Miguel Urbán Crespo. Members of The Left Group in the European Parliament at the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.*



# HOW MANY VICTIMS ARE ENOUGH TO END IMPUNITY?

Since the formal closure of the safe, legal humanitarian corridor on the so-called Balkan route in March 2016, governments, police and border officials have continued their assault on the fundamental rights of people on the move. Whilst prohibited under international law, the practice of pushbacks and other forms of fundamental rights abuses in border areas have been occurring with complete impunity.

Unconvincing denial of any irregularities by government officials and police authorities, as well as the high concordance between patterns of action against potential asylum seekers along the entire Balkan route, suggest that pushbacks are a well-coordinated, systematic practice that have become an increasingly prevalent yet unacknowledged pillar of the European Union's border regime.

In the context of a complete lack of institutional oversight for such practices, the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) was established to systematically monitor pushbacks. Human rights defenders from 14 grassroots NGOs and volunteer collectives managed to do what governments deemed impossible: to find victims and collect substantial evidence of fundamental rights abuses in the EU and at its borders.

Within these pages, we present a selection of 892 group testimonies detailing the experiences of 12,654 people who have been pushed back by EU and non-EU States. Due to the sheer amount of testimonies, the book had to be divided in two volumes.

It must be emphasized that the book presents only the cases the Network were able to directly observe, which means the real number of victims could be much higher. For example, our volunteers were able to record pushbacks of 3,272 people from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina or Serbia in 2019, including 612 people chain-refouled from Italy or Slovenia. According to our estimations that consider statistics released by officials in the relevant countries, roughly 25,000 pushbacks took place from Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and/or Montenegro in 2019. This total estimate includes over 10,000 chain pushbacks of migrants who have been readmitted from Slovenia to Croatia, and then pushed back further.

This is why *The Black Book of Pushbacks*, despite being the most comprehensive repository of testimonies to date, can provide only a glimpse into a much bigger, systematic phenomenon that is still denied and often overlooked. In hopes of bringing perpetrators to justice and holding their superiors accountable, we intend to produce new editions of the book every year, until impunity ends.

Photo: Side injury. Croatian / Bosnian border, BVMN  
<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/october-19-2020-1600-rural-area-9-hours-walking-into-croatia/>

*Hope Barker and Milena Zajović*  
Editors of *The Black Book of Pushbacks*

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

## Countries:

HR - Croatia  
SRB - Serbia  
SLO - Slovenia  
ROM - Romania  
HUN - Hungary  
BiH - Bosnia-Herzegovina  
ITA - Italy  
AUS - Austria  
MNK - North Macedonia  
MNE - Montenegro  
GR - Greece  
TUR - Turkey

## EU Terminology:

EU - European Union  
MS - Member State  
TCNs - Third-country nationals  
ECCHR - European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights  
ECHR - European Convention on Human Rights  
ECtHR - European Court of Human Rights  
CEAS - Common European Asylum System  
CJEU - Court of Justice of the European Union

## Other terminology:

HCG - Hellenic Coast Guard  
EDWs - Electric discharge weapons [1]  
BVMN - The Border Violence Monitoring Network  
POM - People on the move  
NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations  
UN - United Nations  
SAR - Search and Rescue  
NPM - National Preventive Mechanism

1 Colloquially referred to as 'tasers' in some testimonials.

Photos from top:

Spray painted head of a pushback victim, Croatian/Bosnian border, featured in The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/12/croatian-police-accused-of-shaving-and-spray-painting-heads-of-asylum-seeker>  
Greek police raiding a food distribution site in Thessaloniki: BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/police-raid-humanitarian-distribution-site-and-pushback-people-in-need/>  
Police dog bite to calf of a pushback victim, Croatian/Bosnian border, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/december-3-2019-0400-zeljjava-air-base-hr/>





# METHODOLOGY

BVMN documents cross-border pushbacks and broader types of violence enacted by authorities against people on the move (POM). The network collates this information in a shared, open source database which acts as a living archive; visualising trends in border control and acting as a repository of cases for advocacy, media and litigation.

Each case entered into the database represents the experience of an individual or transit group who was illegally removed from one or more territories. In order to collect these 'personal testimonies', field reporters work in various border areas and State interiors, conducting oral interviews.

The methodological process for these interviews leverages the close social contact that BVMN member organisations have as actors supporting POM with essential humanitarian aid. When individuals present themselves with significant injuries or stories of abuse, reporters will sit down with them to collect their testimony. Although the collection process is typically with an individual or small group, the number of those pushed back which they represent can exceed 100.

BVMN has a standardised recording framework. It's interview structure blends hard data (timings, dates, geo-locations, officer and vehicle descriptions, photos of injuries, medical reports and other corroborating evidence) with open narrative accounts of the pushback incidents.

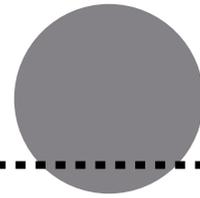
The data collected is coded by certain characteristics. These include; age, nationality and gender, types of violence used, police involved, treatment in detention and attempted asylum claims. This has allowed BVMN to trace the use of different physical, structural and psychological violations, and to identify the locations and perpetrators involved. The personal data of respondents is anonymised, to protect their safety and prevent recriminations from perpetrating State authorities. While the Network has been using the same method of oral interviews since its inception, reports from 2018 to 2020 have significantly advanced with the application of new investigative methods, and the expansion of the BVMN reporting team. Therefore some reports from 2017, though still meeting the requirements of core data for our database, may be of shorter length.

*Written by Simon Campbell (BVMN)*

Photo: Head injury sustained in a pushback, Croatian/Bosnian border BVMN;  
<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/january-8-2020-0130-near-buhaca-croatia/>

# LEGAL CONTEXT

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Pushbacks occur when POM are forced back over borders without being afforded the opportunity to apply for asylum. Within this, individual circumstances are not considered, there is no option to challenge the expulsion, and violent methods are employed that can constitute torture. As such, pushbacks are illegal. They constitute prohibited acts of collective expulsion and amount to severe and multiple human rights violations at the national, European and international level.

The right to asylum is anchored in international law under Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1]. In EU law, the Schengen Borders Code, Article 14 [2], stipulates that anyone at an EU border who does not fulfill the entry conditions must be granted entrance to seek international protection. This right is rooted in the EU Charter Article 28 [3] which obliges Member States (MS) to respect the Refugee Convention, and also in the EU Qualification Directive.

There is an explicit prohibition on collective expulsions in international law under Protocol 4, Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) 5 [4]. That is, “any measure compelling aliens, as a group, to leave the country, except where such a measure is taken on the basis of a reasonable and objective examination of the particular case of each individual alien of the group.” [5] Consequently, a lack of an individual assessment or of an effective remedy can constitute a violation of Article 4. In EU law, collective expulsions are also prohibited under the EU Charter, Article 19 [6].

The principle of non-refoulement is a universally binding rule. It prohibits the return of an individual to a State where their life or freedom is at risk. This is circumscribed into international law by the Refugee Convention, Article 33 [7], and in the ECHR, Article 3 [8]. The case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) developed the latter prohibition on torture and inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment to an absolute non-refoulement norm, irrespective of circumstance. In short, returns require a case-by-case assessment to examine whether a country of return is safe for an individual.

At the European level, non-refoulement is forbidden under Article 19 of the EU Charter [9]. Whilst the EU Returns Directive [10] recognises the legitimate right of MS to return illegally staying third-country nationals (TCNs) under preamble point 8, it also requires an equitable and efficient asylum system. Namely, one that respects the principle of non-refoulement (Article 5) and access to legal remedies, specifically to a review of return decisions before an impartial and independent judicial or administrative body (Article 13).

Methods employed to execute pushbacks violate the prohibition on torture, inhuman or degrading treatment. In international law this amounts to a violation of the Convention on Torture and Article 3 of the ECHR [11]. The jurisprudence of the ECtHR confers positive legal obligations upon police, security forces and law enforcement officials regarding the latter. These duties include: the requirement of a legal framework that effectively protects ECHR rights, the requirement of effective steps to deter conduct that would breach these rights, the requirement to provide information and advice to individuals who may be at risk of their human rights being breached, and the requirement to effectively investigate breaches of human rights. In EU law, the EU Charter prohibits torture under Article 4 [12]. Article 15 of the EU’s Return Directive [13] also requires humane and dignified treatment of detainees, in respect of their fundamental rights. Detention should only occur by way of exception in cases ordered by an authoritative decision, in specialised facilities and which can be appealed (Point 17).

Binding international, European and national laws impose clear positive duties on MS to protect migrants prior to expulsion; to recognise their right to seek asylum, respect their basic human rights, to assess their individual situation and guarantee legal remedies. As the above demonstrates, pushbacks are unlawful. They not only occur largely outside of legal procedures, but appear to systematise the violation of these fundamental rights.

*Written by Antonija Pindulić (CPS)  
and Abby d’Arcy (BVMN)*

# OBSERVED FORMS OF TORTURE



Photos: Croatian police officers with batons pushing people back to Bosnia, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/it-is-about-expulsion-about-unlawful-deterring-migrants-from-the-border-collective-statement-as-response-to-the-croatian-ministry-of-the-interior/>

BVMN's extensive database of illegal pushbacks and collective expulsions of POM has consistently demonstrated that torture and inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment is routine at the EU's borders. While BVMN attests that inhumane treatment has always been the *modus operandi* of illegal pushbacks, the Network's findings show that in 2020 its severity and choreography has only intensified in comparison to previous years. It is now rare to not experience one or multiple forms of abuse when pushed back. In Croatia and Greece, this applies to nearly 90% of all recorded cases.

Overall in 2020, 85% of all testimonies indicated treatment that may amount to a breach of Article 3 of the ECHR [14]. Of increasing concern to BVMN is the indiscriminate nature of the violence and abuse, with over a third of observed pushbacks involving minors, the youngest of whom was just 5 months old. In Greece, minors were amongst over half of groups subject to violent pushbacks.

Across the eleven States from which BVMN has collected testimonies, the excessive and disproportionate use of force is the most frequent typology of torture documented. While this represents a broad pattern of abuse used by different regional authorities, physical assault through the use of police batons, improvised weapons or fists and feet are most commonly reported.

A closer focus on testimonies from Croatia reveals abuse in nearly 90% of recorded cases in 2020, corresponding to an increasingly choreographed use of violence by authorities. Forced undressing and the use of firearms more than doubled in comparison to 2019, whilst inhumane treatment in police cars and dog attacks increased twofold.

BVMN has identified seven typologies of torture and inhumane treatment that are commonplace across the EU during pushbacks, including excessive and disproportionate force, use of electric discharge weapons (EDW's), forced undressing, threats or excessive force with firearms, inhumane treatment inside police vehicles and detention with no basic facilities. In addition, the Network has documented further actions which, while no less cruel, fall outside the established patterns of abuse. Evidence of a mock execution by attempted lynching, multiple people being thrown into the Evros river with their hands tied behind their backs and cases of police smearing food and spray-painting the heads of migrants, demonstrates the growing sadistic nature of pushback practices in 2020.

There is no justification for the continued and systematic violation of Article 3 of the ECHR [15] at European borders. BVMN calls upon the relevant authorities to open a free and fair investigation into all allegations of violence, inhumane treatment and torture by police and border officials. BVMN asserts that failure to launch an effective investigation into these allegations, despite the publication of numerous comprehensive reports, could further constitute an infringement of Article 3.

*Written by Abby d'Arcy (BVMN)  
and Joseph Cripps (AYS)*

Photo: Phones of people on the move routinely destroyed by police officers during pushbacks, Croatian/Serbian border BVMN <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/october-26-2019-0100-close-to-lipovac-croatia/>



# LACK OF INDEPENDENT BORDER MONITORING

Since 2016, BVMN members have sought to raise awareness of police misconduct against POM and have tried triggering either internal control mechanisms or external investigations by State bodies. Despite mounting evidence of pushbacks, institutions such as the State's Attorney Office of the Republic of Croatia have regularly rejected findings as unfounded or unsubstantiated.

Moreover, instead of providing real, effective formal investigations of police misconduct, governments have often turned against human rights defenders who were reporting on pushbacks and other irregularities. In an ongoing case in Croatia, a volunteer of AYS who was monitoring access to asylum was charged for allegedly facilitating illegal border crossing, and the Ministry of Interior asked for a ban of work of the NGO [16]. In 2020, Greek authorities launched an investigation against independent monitoring NGOs, including BVMN members Josoor and Mare Liberum [17].

Shrinking space for civil society, in addition to ineffective and often biased formal mechanisms, have left little room for independent monitoring of pushbacks and other forms of abuse. In 2018, the European Commission awarded the EMAS grant to Croatia [18], with a requirement for the State to set up an independent monitoring mechanism in order to guarantee Croatia's compliance with fundamental rights in its border surveillance activities. The Croatian States failure to establish such a mechanism and subsequent cover-up [19] have additionally amplified the need for truly independent border monitoring to be put in place.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum [20] foresees a monitoring mechanism, but only as a part of pre-triage procedures. Once again, the Commission is failing to observe the need to monitor police activities in the so-called green border areas, where most violations are occurring. Apart from the limited scope of the proposed system, BVMN is also worried by the way the mechanism is being developed. It seems that the Croatian Ministry of Interior is leading the process in collaboration with the Commission, which means that those who are responsible for pushbacks are now tasked with designing the system to monitor themselves, to allegedly prevent pushbacks from happening.

Instead of designing a new and impotent system that could be easily circumvented, BVMN proposes to utilize the existing mechanisms and their competences, but to expand their funding and the scope of operations. National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) are independent visiting bodies established at the domestic level, composed of one or more bodies, for the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As such, they could lead to truly independent monitoring mechanisms, in collaboration with independent monitoring NGOs and State authorities.

The mechanisms should include unannounced visits to border zones and police stations in the border areas, full access to data in border police stations, and must see enhanced cross-border collaboration in testimony collection from the affected population, as the ineffective mechanisms that are currently in place only take into account the cases of those who were able to remain in European territory, and therefore were not necessarily victims of unlawful practices. Such a monitoring mechanism would benefit from an alarm system that could be triggered by potential asylum seekers in situations where their fundamental rights are violated.

*Written by Milena Zajović (AYS)*

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Chain pushback of five men from Austria through Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia on 5th September 2020, as described by BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/september-5-2020-1930-near-laafeld-austria/>



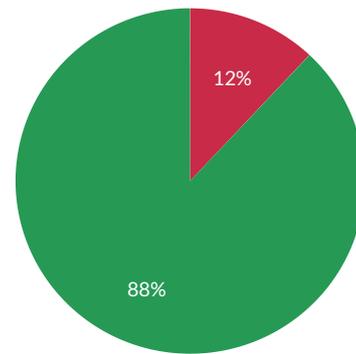
# OVERALL STATISTICS

## Testimonies of pushbacks collected by BVNM

Year	Number of testimonies	Affected persons
<b>Overall</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>12,654</b>
2017	116	1,247
2018	219	2,059
2019	308	3,302
2020	249	6,046

## Chain pushbacks

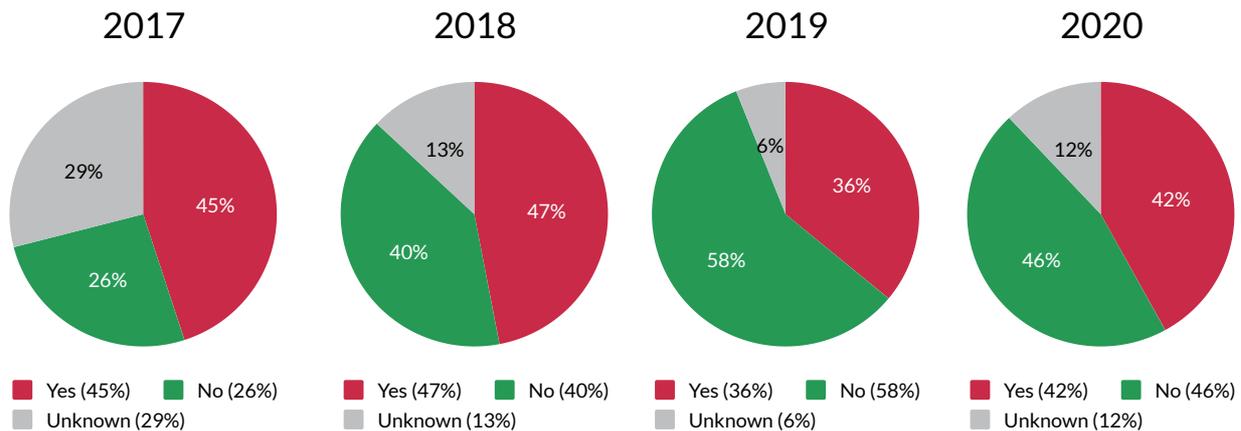
A Chain pushback is a form of coordinated serial refoulement. For example: a person is pushed back from Slovenia to Croatia, and then from Croatia directly to Bosnia.



■ Yes (12%) ■ No (88%)

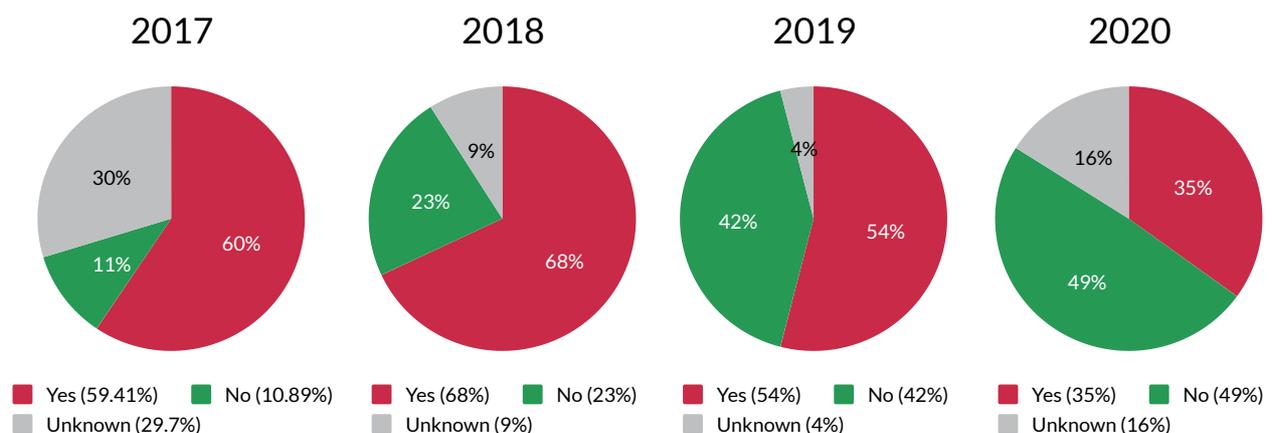
## Pushbacks involving minors

Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old



## Intention to ask for asylum

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection.



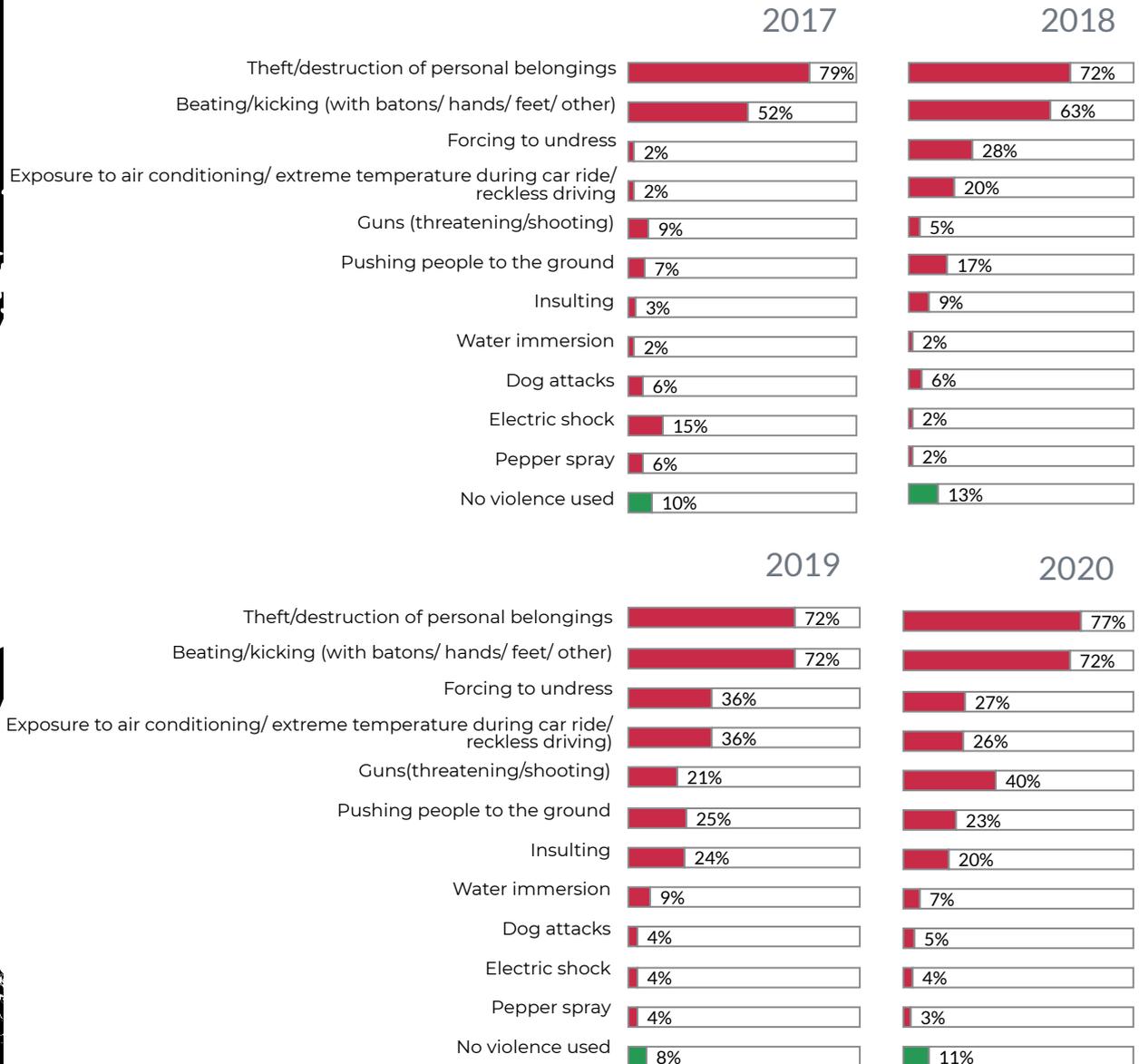
## Collected testimonies

Amount of testimonies collected per month. The displayed numbers do not refer to all pushbacks, only those collected by the BVMN.



## Most common types of violence used in pushbacks

How often does which type of violence occur in testimonies collected by BVMN. (Note: more than one type of violence occurs in the testimonies collected by the Network).



# ITALY



The “hotspot” approach has become the standard operating system for managing the first reception of POM on the Southern Italian border. By the end of November 2020, four hotspots were operating in Italy - Taranto, Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Messina - with a total of 1,072 places.[1] Approximately 22,000 POM arrived in Italy between August 2019 and July 2020.[2] During the Covid-19 pandemic, Italian authorities developed a new practice of using quarantine boats,[3] where migrants are kept in de facto detention, without access to the territory of the country.

In 2018, the Decree Law 113/2018[4] introduced provisions for the detention of persons in hotspots whose nationality cannot be determined. POM can be held for up to 30 days for the purpose of identification (Articles 2, 3 and 4). They are then classified as either ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘economic migrants’ depending on the result of a summary assessment. This law also introduced border procedures applicable for those arriving from a designated ‘safe country of origin’, or those making an application for asylum directly at the border, after being apprehended for evading, or attempting to evade, controls.

A key concern from the Italian perspective is the practice of sea pushbacks in the Mediterranean, which are often conducted by the Libyan Coast Guard in conjunction with the Italian government. As per a Memorandum of Understanding between the two States, Italy provides both operational and financial support to the Libyan coastguard.[5] Italy has been brought before the ECtHR on this matter in the case of *S.S. and others v Italy*.[6]

Since June 2018, the Italian government has both delayed and prohibited the disembarkation of POM rescued at sea as part of a broader 'closed ports' policy.[7] This includes those picked up by the International Red Cross, ships deployed in Operation Sophia and Italian Red naval units.[8] Indeed, throughout 2020, several NGO vessels endured long stand-offs at sea before being able to disembark rescued migrants to places of safety - a trend increasingly mimicked in the case of Greece.

Italian authorities have also perpetrated illegal expulsions. From 1st January to 15th April 2020, a total of 421 persons were subject to maritime pushbacks. Data concerning Adriatic ports reveals that authorities in Bari have initiated the highest number of pushbacks, standing at 311.[9] In many cases, pushbacks from Adriatic ports take place without any individualised assessment, without considering claims for international protection, and have occurred in cases concerning unaccompanied minors.

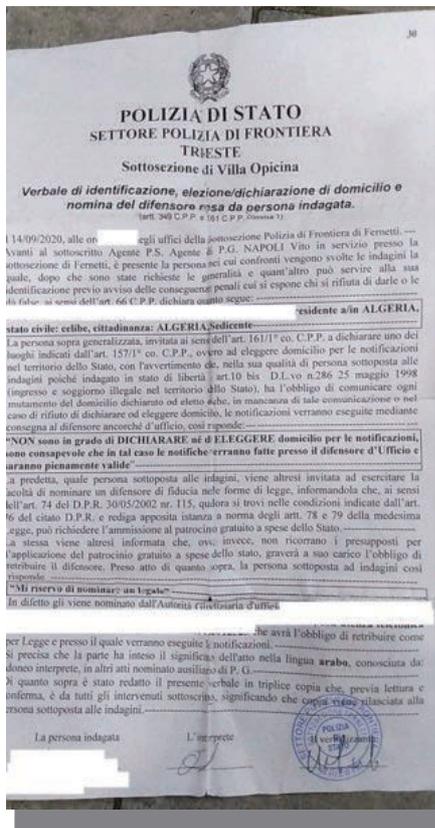
While BVMN has collected 28 pushback testimonies from Italy, detailing the treatment of 206 persons, other organisations with a consistent presence within the region testify to a far higher number. The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI), an Italian organisation, reports that in the first four months of 2020, 1,432 people were pushed back at airports, often after being summarily detained for several days in facilities not designed for the reception of those seeking international protection.[10]

The Italian Minister of Interior recently announced that since the beginning of 2020 to September, 852 individuals had been readmitted to Slovenia.[11] Italy and Slovenia never reintroduced internal border controls and readmissions are carried out through a bilateral agreement between the two signed in 1996.[12] In July 2020, the Ministry of Interior confirmed that such readmissions take place outside of formal, legal frameworks and are applied "even if the intention to apply for international protection is expressed." [13]



Photo: Group photographed in Italy, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/july-15-2020-0000-piazza-liberta-trieste/>





Importantly, POM pushed back to Slovenia are, as observed in a number of BVMN's reports, then further readmitted, via Croatia, to either BiH or Serbia in a chain pushback. These practices constitute grave human rights violations, putting POM at risk of detention, torture or inhumane and degrading treatment.

*Written by Anna Brambilla (ASGI)*

Photo: Domicile paper, Italy BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/deport-from-trieste/>

- 1 EuroMed Rights. (2020).** Perché il nuovo Patto europeo sulla Migrazione penalizza sia l'Italia che i richiedenti asilo. Available: <https://euomedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Perche%CC%81-il-nuovo-Patto-europeo-sulla-Migrazione-penalizza-sia-l%E2%80%99Italia-che-i-richiedenti-asilo.pdf> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 2 InfoMigrants. (2020).** Migrant sea arrivals in Italy up 149%. InfoMigrants. Available: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/26686/migrant-sea-arrivals-in-italy-up-149#:~:text=Arrivals%20on%20Italy's%20shores%20rose,2018%20and%20July%2031%2C%202019.> Accessed: 04/12/2020
- 3 European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2020).** Italy Considers Patrols Off Tunisia to Halt Sea Arrivals, Use of Quarantine Ships Raises Human Rights Concerns. Available: <https://www.ecre.org/italy-considers-patrols-off-tunisia-to-halt-sea-arrivals-use-of-quarantine-ships-raises-human-rights-concerns/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 4 The President of the Republic. (2018).** Decree Law 113/2018: Provisions Regarding the Issue of Special Temporary Resident Permits for Humanitarian Needs as well as the Matter of International Protection and Immigration. Available: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/10/04/18G00140/sg> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 5 The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration. (2017).** Italy-Libya agreement: the Memorandum text. Available: <https://www.asgi.it/english/italy-libya-agreement-the-memorandum-text/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 6 European Court of Human Rights. (2019).** S.S. and Others v. Italy. Application number 21660/18. Available: [https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/EctHR-SS\\_v\\_Italy\\_final-JointTPI-ICJECREAIREDCR-English-2019.pdf](https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/EctHR-SS_v_Italy_final-JointTPI-ICJECREAIREDCR-English-2019.pdf) [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 7 The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration. (2020).** AIDA 2019 Update on Italy. Available: <https://en.asgi.it/report-aida-2019-update-on-italy/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 8 The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration. (2020).** AIDA 2019 Update on Italy. Available: <https://en.asgi.it/report-aida-2019-update-on-italy/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 9 Statistics obtained from ASGI's internal Freedom of Information Requests** to the Italian Ministry of Interior.
- 10 Ibid.**
- 11 Ibid.**
- 12 The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration. (2020).** Italy-Slovenia border: ASGI's open letter to the Italian Government and UNHCR. Available: <https://en.asgi.it/informal-readmissions-balkan-route-asgi-letter-government-unhcr/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
- 13 The Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration. (2020).** Italy-Slovenia border: ASGI's open letter to the Italian Government and UNHCR. Available: <https://en.asgi.it/informal-readmissions-balkan-route-asgi-letter-government-unhcr/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].

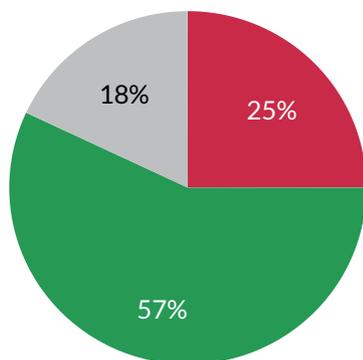
# STATISTICS

## Testimonies of pushbacks in Italy

Year	Number of testimonies	Affected persons
<b>Overall</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>181</b>
2017	0	0
2018	0	0
2019	2	12
2020	25	169

### Pushbacks involving minors in Italy

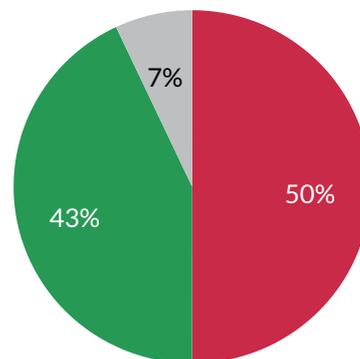
Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old



Yes (25%) No (57%)  
Unknown (18%)

### Intention to ask for asylum in Italy

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection.



Yes (50%) No (43%)  
Unknown (7%)

20/11/2020

## “MINOR PUSHED-BACK THROUGH SEA FOR THE SECOND TIME IN TWO WEEKS”

**Date and time:** November 20, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Bari, Italy

**Coordinates:** 41.1327435, 16.8668087

**Pushback from:** Greece, Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 17 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, exposure to extreme temperatures during long hours

**Police involved:** 6 to 7 Italian police officers, 2 Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent of this testimony is a 17 year-old Afghan boy who arrived to the Italian port of Bari in the morning of the 20th of November. He had been hiding for approximately 16 hours overnight under a truck which was on a vessel from the “Super Fast Ferries” company.

Once in the port, his presence was detected through an x-ray scan that trucks in the port go through. Thereupon, the boy was ordered to come out from below the truck. When the respondent did so, he depicts being pushed to the floor and. While he was still lying, one of the police officers hit him.

**“He hit me with a baton. Here, near the ribs”**, he explains, pointing at his still hurting body part.

When the victim could minimally recover himself and look around at where he was, he realised it was a big number of Italian police officers surrounding him: he recalls there being around 6-7 of them. The minor describes his memories of the scene:

**“The officers were talking amongst themselves, discussing what they would do with me. One of them said they could bring me to a refugee camp in the country. But then another one said ‘no, bring him back to Greece’”**.

Never being addressed or asked anything about who he was, how old he was or where he wanted to go, the victim was handcuffed and put inside a vehicle to be taken to a police station inside the port. Once in the station, he was ordered to sit down: his fingerprints were scanned and a picture of his face was taken, all of this without the presence of a translator.

When asked about whether any of his belongings were taken, the young man explains how his trousers and jacket were forcibly taken from him and never returned, as he was wearing a double-layer of both. Furthermore, his shoes, documents and mobile phone were confiscated in the detention process and would be given back only once he was back in Greek territory.

After the so-called “procedure”, the police took the respondent back on a boat. **“It was a ‘SUPERFAST’ ship again”**, he certifies. He was locked inside a small room, described to be the same or similar to the one he was locked in on the first time he was pushed-back from Italy, only one week ago. It was the second time he was being pushed-back to Greece in a time frame of only two weeks.

The temperature inside the boat was extremely cold. He was given no blankets and the respondent was uncertain of how long the journey back took: the absence of mobile phone or watch made it hard to tell.

**“I was not given any food or water. Not in the police station, not on the boat. I did not even care about the food or the water, I just wanted a blanket so that I could sleep. It was so cold inside the ship”.**

After an estimated time of 9 hours, the minor was made to leave the ship in the Greek port of Igoumenitsa, three hours away by bus from his starting point Patras.

In Igoumenitsa, the boy describes being taken to a police station inside the port, where two police officers returned his confiscated items –yet not the trousers or jacket– and gave him a piece of paper of unknown meaning. The 17 year-old then made his way back to Patras by bus.

**“Why do Italian and Greek authorities deport us people like this? They see I am a minor, why would that officer order to push me back? This is not a good thing.”**

08/11/2020

## **“CALMED DOWN THROUGH LIES... AND THEN PUSHED-BACK TO GREECE”**

**Date and time:** November 8, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Bari, Italy

**Coordinates:** 41.1327435, 16.8668087

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 16-19 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, forcing to undress, being stepped on, exposure to extreme temperatures for long hours

**Police involved:** Italian police officers, Greek port security guards (one was short, fat with a black beard with some white hairs and short black hair, the other was tall and thin)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent of this testimony described hiding underneath the rain cover of a truck onboard a ship leaving from Greece on the 7th of November. The SUPERFAST vessel – model either I or II – left Greece at approximately 6:00 pm and reached the Italian port of Bari on the next morning. It was when the truck was moving to leave the vessel that the driver spotted him and told him to get off.

According to the respondent, there were Italian police officers waiting for the young Afghan man outside the vehicle. The respondent recalled falling down while exiting the truck and lying on the ground. He was shaken up by some water the officers threw on his face. Once awake, the officers took the victim's shoes off in order to check if the respondent was hiding anything inside them: the young man's shoes were returned after not having found anything inside them.

***"I was ready to run, but then they told me 'Sit down, there is no problem. You want to go to Germany, Paris... we will help you, no problem, sit down'".***

The Italian police insisted in making the young man believe he was not going to be pushed-back to Greece and that they would help him reach his desired destination. Once their aim was achieved through lies, they handcuffed him and took him to the police station inside the port. There, the only personal belongings he had were confiscated: mainly his cell phone and documents. During the whole procedure there was no translator present and he was not given any food.

All in all, the testimony respondent described spending one hour in total in the police station, where his fingerprints and personal information were taken. He was then taken back to a vessel the respondent claims to be the same one he had travelled in, or at least one of the same model: a SUPERFAST boat.

Inside the boat he was locked in a small room on the lowest floor of the vessel. The respondent recalled a paper being given to whom he describes as the captain of the ship.

***"I tried to sleep but the floor was too cold to sleep on. I spent the whole night standing up and sitting down just not to feel the cold. There was not a blanket in the room, no bed, no toilet, no food. Standing and sitting, standing and sitting".***

When asked about the length of the journey back, the young man estimated 14 hours, even though it was difficult to tell while being locked in a room without a mobile phone for long hours.

The vessel ultimately returned back to Patras, Greece, where port security guards came to find the man in the room. Still inside, the respondent described that the guards were physically violent with him, striking him using their bare hands.

Eventually he was taken to the port security headquarters, where he was hit again by a different port security guard: this time the victim described his feet being aggressively stepped on while the aggressor's foot twisted and put more weight onto the victim's body. This aggressor is in turn described as being tall and thin.

The victim spent about two hours inside the port security headquarters, where he moreover describes being badly insulted. **"They used a lot of bad words against me"**, he claims. In that same place, the young man received his documents back, with an added writing on the back which reads "13/11/20 Athens".

**"The port security guards told me that I could go to Athens or elsewhere, but that they did not want to see me again in Patras".**

After this threat from the port authorities, the young man could go back into the city of Patras, arriving once again to his starting point on the 9th of November at approximately 10:00 am.

**07/11/2020**

## **"IN ITALY THEY HIT MY FRIEND. IN GREECE THEY BEAT THE TWO OF US. "**

**Date and time:** November 7, 2020 12:00

**Location:** Bari, Italy

**Coordinates:** 41.1327435, 16.8668087

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 16 and 24 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, exposure to extreme temperatures during long hours

**Police involved:** 8 to 10 Italian police officers, 2 Greek police officers and unknown number of Greek port security guards

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The main respondent of this testimony described being inside a truck onboard a vessel which left from Greece, together with a fellow companion on the 6th of November. The ship described as being the "SUPERFAST" model departed at approximately 6:00 pm from the Greek port of Patras arriving in Bari on the next morning at approximately 10:00 am – after 16 hours of transit.

According to the minor's words, it was in the check-in scan the truck was going through in order to leave the the vessel that their bodies were detected. The doors to the truck's cargo

opened and approximately eight to ten Italian police officers were waiting for the two young men, ordering them to come out.

***“I did not understand what they were saying to me; they were speaking Italian”.***

The two men did so, but when they were ordered to get inside the police's vehicle, the respondent's companion presented resistance in doing so, fearing that he would be pushed-back and begging for that not to happen. His plead was met negatively by the officials, who in turn pushed and hit the young man, forcing him into the vehicle also ignoring his petition to remain in Italy.

***“They didn't handcuff me, they just grabbed me by the arm strongly to push me inside the car. My friend was hit by five Italian police officers in front of me just because he did not want to enter the car”.***

The two victims were taken to the police station inside the port, where they remained for an approximate time of two hours with no translator present: their fingerprints were scanned and a picture showing their height was taken.

***“They took my jacket, my shoes, my mobile phone, my documents. They left me with just my T-shirt and trousers”.***

After this poor procedure, the Afghan men were taken to a boat the respondent describes as being the same exact one they had reached Italy in. The officers took them to a small room where they were locked for the long hours back to Greece.

***“It was a very small room. A very bad room. It was very cold and there were no blankets or no toilet”.*** The respondent reiterated that not only their shoes, but also their jackets had been previously confiscated by the Italian officers.

When the ship arrived to Patras in the afternoon of November 8th, two local Greek police officers were described as having entered the vessel to find the minor and the fellow young man in the locked room. The respondent highlights that they were wearing normal clothes. He describes one of them as being “big and fit, with some white hairs”.

Still on the ship, the Greek officers hit them:

***“In Italy they hit my friend. Here they beat the two of us”.***

***“The police hit me with their fists and asked me ‘why did you go to Italy? We will deport you to Turkey now’”.***

After the threat of being chain pushed-back to Turkey, the victims were then taken to the port security headquarters inside the port of Patras, where their fingerprints were once again taken and where they were tested for COVID-19.

While his companion was freed after this three-hour long procedure, the main respondent of this testimony was taken to the police headquarters of Patras, where he was locked in a cell for a night. The victim was released on the 9th of November at approximately 10:00 am from the headquarters after receiving his confiscated belongings back.

24/10/2020

## **“THE YOUNG MAN SPENT 64 HOURS IN JOURNEY ONLY TO END UP IN THE SAME PLACE WHERE HE HAD STARTED”**

**Date and time:** October 24, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Venice, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.4383649, 12.307342

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 20 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 6-8 Italian police officers, unknown number of Greek port security guards and police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** handcuffed

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The boat, the respondent of this testimony was on, parted at approximately 6:00pm of the 22nd of October. He claims to have been hiding under a rain cover that was over the truck and that it was when the truck was turning around to exit the ship once in the destination port that the driver was able to see the man on his vehicle. Shortly after, around 6 to 8 Italian police officers came to find him.

After confiscating all of his personal belongings (shoes, cell phone and documents), the officials handcuffed the young man. Afterwards, they asked him where he was going, to what the victim answered he wanted to go to France, where he would meet with his family.

**“I told them I had family in Europe and asked them not to push me back. They didn’t give me any food or any water. I didn’t even have access to a toilet. They pushed me back immediately”.**

The respondent highlights that there was what he referred to as a “person from the UN”, whom he described as an official translator from Pakistan. **“The translator told me that they could not leave let me stay in Italy and that they would deport me”.** In the procedure, the victim told the translator that he was feeling sick and with great pain in the throat: he needed to be seen by a doctor. His petition was ignored and his right to health was violated.

**“You can go to the doctor when you are back in Athens”**, the officers answered.

The respondent did not even abandon the boat as he was not taken to a police station. Still handcuffed, he was taken inside a small room in the same boat he had travelled to Italy in. The officials who had arrested him were the ones to place and lock him inside the vessel’s room, where he spent the next long hours alone. Fortunately, there was food, water and a blanket.

The journey back was as long as the journey to Venice, which takes 32 hours –one-way– in the ferry company Anek Lines, one of the few to do this route regularly. In total, hence, the victim spent over 64 hours in this journey –almost four full days– only to end up in the same place where he had started from.

**12/10/2020**

## **“HIS SHOES AND MOBILE PHONE WERE CONFISCATED UNTIL THE RETURN”**

**Date and time:** October 12, 2020 10:00

**Location:** Bari, Italy

**Coordinates:** 41.1327435, 16.8668087

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 21, from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used, forcing to undress, exposure to extreme temperatures during long hours

**Police involved:** Two Italian port security guards, two Italian policemen, unknown number of Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present, handcuffed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The 21-year-old Afghan man who was the primary respondent for this testimony described being under a truck inside a ship from Patras to Bari on the 11th of October, 2020. The vessel arrived to Italian territory on the 12th at around 8:00 am. The driver of the truck, along with two port security guards, were the ones to find him in his hiding spot. In this moment, the Italian police was called, who shortly thereafter arrived and transported him to a police office inside the port.

Once in the detention place, the Afghan man clarified that his English is very limited, yet there was no translator present. The respondent denied having documents and expressed his desire to remain in Italy, asking not to be deported. The officials told him to keep quiet, not to speak. Consequently, they asked him for his first and last name, and took a picture of him. His fingerprints were also recorded into a computer at this time.

The time spent in the police station was approximately 4.5 hours, during which time he sat handcuffed and his shoes and mobile phone were confiscated. He was only given two biscuits to eat, water, and a cigarette. He was repeatedly told not to speak.

After some time, he was transported from this station onto a vessel in the port and locked in a room. After a short time, this vessels began a journey back to Greece. On the journey back, he was in a small room with a bed but no blankets, exposed to the cold air conditioner of the vessel.

***“It was very cold in there, no blankets, no nothing”.***

He was not given access to a toilet or a washroom either. To eat he had half a sandwich and a 1.5 litre water bottle. The respondent described staying in this single room for approximately 15 hours that it took to arrive back to Greece.

Once the ship finally arrived back to port in Greece, the respondent described being pushed-back after arriving to the port of Patras on the afternoon of the 13th of October. He was taken in briefly to the “detention station” within the Patras port, during which time he was given his shoes and phone back. Eventually, he was allowed to leave and exited the port back into the city.

**10/10/2020**

## **“GIVE US YOUR FINGERPRINTS AND THEN YOU ARE FREE TO GO, THEY PROMISED”**

**Date and time:** October 10, 2020 18:00

**Location:** Ancona, Italy

**Coordinates:** 43.6184616, 13.5047903

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 19 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, forcing to undress, exposure to extreme temperatures for long hours

**Police involved:** 2 Italian police cars, 3 Italian police officers or more, unknown number of Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent of this testimony is a 19-year-old boy from Afghanistan. He described crossing the Adriatic sea hiding under a truck on a Grimaldi Lines Minoan vessel for 24 hours, reaching Italian port city of Ancona at 6:00 pm on the 10th of October. Once in the desired destination, the driver of the truck proceeded to check his vehicle, where he found the boy hiding.

The respondent's immediate reaction was to run away, trying to abandon the vessel. On the door to exit the ship towards the port of Ancona, he met port security guards who began to chase him. Even though he claims it was 6 or 7 guards who were running after him, he succeeded in not being caught and continued to run towards the exit of the port that would lead him to the city. However, once outside the fence of the port, he encountered Italian police officers.

**“A police car approached me by the front and at the same time, another police car approached me from the back. I was trapped and there was no way to run.”**

The respondent was trapped between police cars and police officers. Consequently, he was handcuffed and ordered to get inside the officers' car. He was brought to a nearby police station, where nothing to eat or drink was given to him. He was asked to put his hands on a scanner in order to record his fingerprints, to which the boy attempted to refuse. The officers promised him that, after leaving his fingerprints, he would be set free. Still, the boy tried to resist. His response was met negatively by the officials, who began to hit and kick him, coercing the victim to put his hands in the scanner. He was punched and kicked in his whole body, from neck below.

**“It was two officers that hit me. The first one seemed to be “the big boss”. One was fat and had curly brown hair, the other one was thin. There was also a police woman in front of me who was witnessing everything.”**

After the aggression and the non-consenting fingerprint scan, a photograph of his face showing his height was taken. The attestant further recalls being forced to sign a paper. The paper was written in Italian, there was no translator present and he was and continues to be unaware of what it is he signed for. He was not given any documents to keep during the procedure and, furthermore, his mobile phone was confiscated, together with his shoes.

When asked if he requested asylum or expressed his will to stay in Italy, the respondent answers positively, stressing what the police had promised him: **“Give us your fingerprints and then you are free to go”.**

Overall, he spent only about 2 hours in Italian territory: what the police officers had promised was a lie. After they had taken what they needed from him, he was taken back to the same boat in which he came: a Grimaldi Minoan Lines cruise ship (either the Cruise Europa or Cruise Olympia).

He was placed on a tiny room on the lowest floor of the ship, near to the engines of the vehicle. Inside the room, he was alone. There was a bunkbed but he was given no blankets to compensate for the extremely cold temperature the room was in. The only food given to him was a bag of chips, helplessly perceived as a mocking gesture by the respondent, along with a small water bottle. The journey back to Patras was approximately 21 hours in transit.

The respondent was pushed-back to Patras, arriving on the 11th of October to his starting point. His personal objects were given back to him in the police station of the Greek port.

03/10/2020

## “LOCKED INSIDE A CELL FOR 10 DAYS AFTER BEING PUSHED-BACK FROM ITALY”

**Date and time:** October 3, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Ancona, Italy

**Coordinates:** 43.6207161, 13.5087895

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 17 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used, exposure to extreme temperatures during long hours

**Police involved:** 5 Italian police officers, unknown number of Greek port security guards and unknown number of Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent of this testimony is a minor of Afghan nationality who reached the port of Ancona in Italy on the 1st of October. The vessel he travelled in is a “SUPERFAST” boat which parted at 17.30h on a Sunday, arriving to its destination in the following afternoon after about 24h of journey.

According to the testimony, it was through the **x-ray scanning system** the truck he was hiding in had to go through that his presence was detected. Consequently, a large number of Italian police officers were waiting for him on his exit from the vehicle. All of them were wearing the same “police officer uniform”.

***“They told me to come out [of the vehicle] and asked me how old I was. I told them I was 15. A ‘boss’ then came, looked at me, and considered I was lying, that I was not a minor. He told the rest of the officers that I would be sent back to Greece”.***

It seemed as though the push-back of the victim was justified only because the head of the officers considered –without having any proof– that he was not a minor.

Being surrounded by an approximate number of 5 officers, the victim further describes his body being checked while still standing in the port. When the officers found a paper in his pocket written in a language they did not understand, they tore the paper in front of his eyes: in the sheet there were aid phone numbers of Italian lawyers he could attempt to reach in case the situation being lived happened. That was no longer an option.

After the minor’s shoes and mobile phone were confiscated, the attestant explains being then taken to a place inside the port described as “a room for the port security” and “certainly not a

police station". No translator was present during the whole procedure and in that room his fingerprints were scanned and a photograph of his face was taken.

**"They gave me a paper to sign. I don't speak Italian or English, I did not understand what the paper said".** He had no option but to sign it.

When asked about food or water, the respondent points he was only given a small water bottle. He spent an approximate time of three hours in that room.

**"I told them I wanted to go to Milan; that I did not want to go to Germany or France or anywhere else. They simply said 'no'; that I was going back to Greece".**

After all his personal information was gathered, the officers took the minor back to what the victim claims to be the same ship he had arrived to Italy in: there, he was placed in a small room pictured on a side of the ship and on a low floor. He was locked and alone.

**"The room was very cold and there was light. Someone brought me a water bottle. It was cold water. I gave it back. The room was very cold and so was the water, I did not want to drink it".**

There were no beds or blankets. The floor was cold and hard as if made of concrete. The respondent highlights several times the fact that the only thing he was given was cold water, taking into account the temperature the room was in.

On the 3rd of October the ship reached the Greek port of Patras, bringing the young boy back to his starting point only three days after his departure. Men described as "port security guards" came to meet him in the room. The local police was called and the victim was handcuffed this time. In the police station inside the port, all his personal information – including fingerprints – were once more collected.

He was asked whether he had any documents with him, to which the boy replied negatively. Still, the nightmare was far from being over: the victim was taken to the police station in the centre of the city, where he would spend 10 days locked inside a cell with other men. He was released in the evening of the 12th of October.

**"I was locked inside the police station for 10 days. There were beds, but they were really hard. They did not ever give me any blankets".**

Furthermore, the minor claims being given an expulsion order from Greece with an expiration time of one month, after which the minor fears being pushed back to Turkey or even Afghanistan.

02/10/2020

## “THE MINOR WAS BEATEN UP BY THREE GUARDS IN THE SHIP”

**Date and time:** October 2, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Ship in Venice, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.4383649, 12.307342

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 17 years old, unknown years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** Ship security, Italian police officers and Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 2nd of October, 2020, the respondent – an Afghan minor – was tucked away under a truck inside a ship leaving from Patras to Italy. Once the ship arrived to Venice, the boy was discovered by security guards inside the boat in the port. The men told him “there was nowhere to run”, consequently forcing him to take his shoes off and keeping them from him. He was handcuffed and then brought into what the victim described as “the captain’s room”.

In this room, the respondent described that three Italian officials punched and kicked him in his lower body, even after he expressed being a minor. The respondent believed these men to be security guards.

Afterwards, he was directly brought back to a room in order to be pushed-back to Greece. The small room’s door was locked and he was not given anything to eat – just a bottle of water – for the long hours the trip back to Greece lasted.

Reportedly, the minor was only given his shoes back after arriving in Igoumenitsa, where he was dropped off with an expulsion order to be completed in the time of one month. The respondent also claimed that six other guys were pushed back from Venice to Igoumenitsa on the same date as him. After being returned to Igoumenitsa, the respondent described making his way back to Patras.

21/09/2020

## “I THOUGHT THEY WERE TAKING ME TO CAMP”

**Date and time:** September 21, 2020 00:00

**Location:** On the SS202 near Puglie, in Trieste

**Coordinates:** 45.6177631, 13.8485533

**Pushback from:** Italy, Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 2 persons deported from Italy; 24 persons deported from Croatia person(s), age: Reporter: 20; group mixed ages , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Italian military; 2 Slovenian officers; 10 Croatian officers wearing all black

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

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Around the 21<sup>st</sup> of September a group of 13 young men from Pakistan were apprehended by what they described as Italian military on the SS202 road near the village of Puglie, in Trieste, Italy [coordinates: 45.6177631,13.8485533] . In the days prior, they had made their way to Italy from Bosnia via Croatia and Slovenia. The man making this report was 20 years old; it uncertain whether the group included minors.

After their apprehension by these forces, they were taken to what was described as an army camp and were detained there for around 8 or 9 hours. During this time they were given food and water. The group expressed a desire for asylum to the apprehending officers and the prints from their thumbs and pointer fingers were recorded into a machine. The military figures then told them they would be taken to a camp and had them sign a document that was in Italian. No translation was provided during this time.

Of the thirteen group-members, eleven were taken to a camp in Italy. The man making this report and one other were driven back to the border with Slovenia by two Italian police officers in contrast, however, and were transferred to Slovenian custody. Until they reached the border, they believed they were going to a camp as well.

Once in Slovenia, the two men were then quickly driven in a van across Slovenia by two Slovenian police officers to the border with Croatia. At the border with Croatia, they were then similarly transferred to Croatia custody and loaded into a different van and driven back to the country's border with Bosnia-Herzegovina, near a secluded area northeast of Velika Kladuša. When they were loaded into this new van, they saw that there were many other people also going through the same procedures as them.

Once they arrived to the border area, the two men described seeing approximately 10 police (wearing all black and balaclavas, fitting the uniforms worn by the special police) deported 24

people in two vans to the border with Kladusa. They were taken from the van one by one, robbed of their phones, money, clothes (except underwear) and beaten with batons, then told to go back to Bosnia. Their clothes and bags with supplies were set on fire.

16/09/2020

## “THEY PUNCHED ME BECAUSE I ASKED TO STOP THE HOT AIR - PUSHBACK FROM TRIESTE TO BIHAC”

**Date and time:** September 16, 2020 01:00

**Location:** San Dorligo della Valle, TS, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.607175981734, 13.85383960105

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 25-35 , from: Bangladesh, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, dog attacks, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Italian Army officers, one army van and one army car; several Italian police officers, one police van; several Slovenian police officers, one police van and several Croatian police officers (masked), one german shepard,, one police van.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/ water

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, an Algerian man, left the city of Bihac (BiH) on 2nd September, 2020 in a group with five other Algerians, aged between 22 and 30 years old. After 12 days of travel they arrived in Trieste (ITA). They entered into Italy near the municipality of San Dorligo della Valle (45.607871, 13.857776), in the early morning on the 14th September. While the group was walking along the SP12B road, they were tracked down by what was described as a military convoy, composed of a car and a van. The three people onboard, described by the respondent as being military officers, stopped them at the side of the road and called the Italian police, who arrived shortly after with a van.

The captured group were then transferred with the van to a police station in Ferneti [**exact location**], a site with a military tent erected for identification procedures of people on the move and asylum seekers. The respondent claims that he found himself together with approximately 60 other people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, in addition to a person from Morocco. The respondent stated that many of the people held at the site, were minors or had been fingerprinted previously in Greece.

The people detained in the tent were separated by nationality. Each person of the transit group was questioned and processed individually in a separate, smaller tent, described as a small silo, the others had to wait in a small room which he describes as a "prison-room". Personal data was gathered, fingerprints were taken as well as photos of their faces. The respondent clearly expressed the will to seek asylum in Italy.

The assigned translator for the respondent and his group, of Moroccan origin, was already attending to one person from Morocco who was present when they arrived. The police officers also searched him and confiscated his phone, a power bank and a watch, which were put inside a plastic bag. After that, the respondent had to sign 3 different documents, one of them – an identification and domicile paper – hidden and preserved by the respondent.

*"When they deport you, they make you sign this paper so that they can say you accept it. And of course, you sign it. Who care about you? They just say: 'sign' and you sign, because you don't have power and there is no one listening to you."*

The captured transit group remained in the police station from 08:00 until 17:00. The food was distributed collectively and due to a massive amount of people, some were left without. At some point the respondent requested to go to the toilet and he was taken outside, which allowed him to understand the area where he was. The respondent saw a reception center in front of him.

At the end of the identification procedure, the police took five of the Algerians from the transit group. A sixth person was taken away, however, the respondent stated that this was because he had been fingerprinted in Greece. Some other Moroccans who were present in the tent were also kept there, which the respondent suggests was due to help from the translator in assisting their access to asylum.

*"Translator plays a big role. Maybe 80%"*

The remaining five people from Algeria were put inside a van. The respondent claims that he clearly saw the officers carrying the bag with his personal items, which he thought they would return to him once left at the next destination. The vehicle did neither have windows nor light and the respondent described experiencing difficulties to breathe during the ride. At this point the people-on-the-move received a small bottle of water and a small cracker for the first time since the apprehension.

*"They play with you. You just think just when is it finish."*

Once they were sitting inside the van, the group realized that they were about to be deported to Slovenia and they asked what was going on. The police officers reassured them that they would stay in Trieste. The van then moved on: inside it was very hot and from the ventilation came out hot air. The respondent knocked on a window to attract the attention of the agents, who stopped the van, got out of the vehicle and opened the hatch to ask for explanations of why they were knocking on the window.

There was a squabble, and one of the two officers punched the respondent, but was immediately stopped by his colleague who invited him to calm down. After the incident, they continued to drive and they arrived in an area, which was described as a road border crossing (likely Pesek-Kozina) between Italy and Slovenia. There, the group found a Slovenian police van with police officers waiting for them. They were transferred very quickly from the Italian police

van to the Slovenian van: according to the respondent, officers were looking around with circumspection, as if they were worried about being noticed during the operation ongoing.

Once the captured transit group were transferred to the Slovenian police van, they were taken in a police station, in Kozina, Slovenia. Here the respondent asked for his personal belongings, but the Slovenian police replied that the Italian police had not given them anything. The respondent doesn't know if his belongings were kept by the Italian police officers or if the Slovenian police officers lied to him, keeping his belongings.

In the station in Kozina, the officers took the prints of their thumbs of both hands, and realized that the respondent was already registered in the police database, due to previous entrance he had made into Slovenia (on this occasion he had also signed some documents). Later on, the group was transferred from Kozina to Ljubljana for a Covid-19 screening. After that, they returned to Kozina, where they spent the night detained. They stayed in this this location for what the respondent estimated to be a whole night. During this detention the group members could use the toilet and were handed another small bottle of water but were not provided with any food.

The next morning (15th September) the group were transferred to Croatia, through the Socerga/Pozane border crossing. Here the Slovenian police photographed the documents that they had signed and threw them away in the garbage, before giving the group over to the Croatian police. The respondent, also in this occasion, managed to hide one Italian document, putting it inside his underwear (see previous photograph).

The respondent identified the van that they were put in afterwards to be a Croatian police vehicle. Concerning the ride to Croatia he described that the driver was driving very bumpy, braking very sharply at any given moment.

*“you know, they really try to make you hate yourself. For what you have done and so you never try again to cross border to Croatia.”*

*“If they deport you in the day you stay in the police car all day till it gets night. If they deport you in the night, they let you go directly.”*

In Croatia they had to wait for 15 hours, from 10:00 to 01:00 the next day (16th September) in the van. During this time they were not provided with any food or water and just left alone in the car. While they were waiting several other people-on-the-move were brought into the van by Croatian police officers, including a Bangladeshi man. Finally, at around 01:00 two Croatian police officers drove the van to the border of Bosnian territory, about 10 kilometers out of Bihac.

When they arrived to this location, the respondent described that a Croatian officer wearing a dark uniform and a black ski-mask with a big German Shepherd told them to leave the van and line up in a file. The group-members were then told to get undressed to their boxers and a T-shirt. The officer took all of the clothes in a bin bag and set them on fire. Another officer was waiting behind the wheel of the vehicle during the procedure. The men then had to line up in a row, crowded closely together. The policeman yelled: “haide, go,go,go,go” and let the dog off the leash, which immediately snapped at the arm of the man in the last position in the row. The other men were able to run away in this way, but the last one apparently received a severe wound in his arm. The respondent then walked another 24 hours back to Velika Kladusa.

The indicated location in this report refers to the site of apprehension, not to the pushback itself.

**15/09/2020**

## **“UNDERAGE WERE ADMITTED TO CAMP, EVERYONE ELSE WAS PUSHED BACK”**

**Date and time:** September 15, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Trieste, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.647474211037, 13.7814264646

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 42 person(s), age: 18-30 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 10-15 Croatian officers dressed all in black with ski masks, some number of Italian and Slovenian officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the 15th September, a group of 42 people were pushed back from the Italian city of Trieste to Slovenia, then Croatia and then Bosnia. They arrived in Trieste as a group of 56 people, from both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

According to the respondents, the group went to the camp in the city and spoke to the authorities there. The two primary respondents, both of whom are in their twenties, stated that officers, whom they referred to as ‘commandos’, recorded the fingerprints of two of their fingers into a computer and asked the age of each person. Each group-member expressed an intention to seek asylum in Italy.

Allegedly, after this, those in the group who were under 18 years of age were admitted to camp, while those who were 18 and older were told to get into a waiting vehicles which then brought them directly back to the Slovenian border with Italy. No papers were given to those being pushed back. Once they arrived to the Slovenian border, the group-members were transferred over to the custody of Slovenian authorities and underwent a similar procedures of rapid processing and then transportation in different vehicles to the Croatian border, where they were transferred over to Croatian custody. The Slovenian authorities had paperwork which they gave directly to the Croatian authorities.

The respondents did not see what was written on these papers. Reportedly, neither the Slovenian nor the Croatian officers spoke to the group during the long journey. At the border between Slovenia and Croatia, the group were transferred to 'small' vans. The respondents described that in one vehicle even there was what seemed to be 30 with only enough space to stand.

Finally, the group was then driven back to a secluded area of the Croatian border with Bosnia whereupon they were ordered out of the vans and saw between ten and fifteen officers who were described as 'commandos' wearing black ski masks. According to the respondents, these officers ordered the group-members to take off and leave their shoes and clothing and took a number of valuables from the group such as money and mobile phones. Finally, the group-members were told to enter back into the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina during which time they described being struck by batons from the police officers.

11/09/2020

## “AFTER BEING PUSHED-BACK TO GREECE THEY CALLED A VAN TO DRIVE THEM TO TURKEY”

**Date and time:** September 11, 2020 10:00

**Location:** Brindisi (uncertain), Italy

**Coordinates:** 40.647055017443, 17.962347287242

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 27 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** exposure to extreme temperatures during long hours

**Police involved:** Italian police officers, an Italian police car, Greek police officers and a Greek police car

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The main respondent of this testimony was inside a cargo truck on the night of the 10th of September of 2020, which was in turn on a vessel parting from the Greek port of Igoumenitsa towards Italy.

The boat took only 8 to 10 hours to arrive in Italian territory, likely to the port of Brindisi, arriving hence in the early morning of the 11th of September. The respondent remembers the vessel's main colors to be white and navy blue. According to his testimony, the truck was moving fast in order to exit the boat, and the numerous boxes inside it were moving from one side to the other, which caused the truck driver to wonder if there was a problem with its merchandise. When stopping in order to check, he found a cut on the ceiling of his vehicle, then called the local police.

The officials found the Afghan man inside the truck. In the moment, he was handcuffed and taken to a police station in a vehicle. Once there, he was asked for his age and whether he had any documents with him, to which the victim of the push-back answered negatively. He was then asked individual questions to make a picture of his identity, such as birthplace, nationality, etc. In the process, his fingerprints were taken.

**“I told them I wanted to stay in Italy. I asked for asylum and they answered ‘no, no, maybe later’”.**

All in all, the man spent only about one hour in the Italian port, as he was taken on the police car to a boat that would push him back to Greece. **“It was a different boat than the one I had arrived in, but it was the same ship company.”** This time, however, he was not traveling alone: he was forced to board the ship along with another young Afghan man whom the respondent had never met before.

According to the main respondent of this testimony, the leader of the ship –a woman– ordered the workers of the vessel to take the two men to a room, which the victim refers to as “a cellar” with no access to a toilet or running water.

**“They locked the door after placing us inside: we were in a small dark room resembling a cellar. There was a round window and the freezing air entered constantly. I spent the whole journey running inside the small room. It was very cold.”**

When asked what was inside the cellar, the man answers: **“No beds, no blankets, no light. Nothing. Just cold”.**

In the long 24 hours that the boat took to arrive to Greece, the respondent started a conversation with his companion, and he explains that whereas he had parted from Igoumenitsa, the other man being pushed-back had parted from the port of Patras.

When they arrived to Igoumenitsa, they were taken to a police station inside the port. The respondent highlights that it was near the fence bordering the port. **“In the station, the police officers told us: ‘There is a van coming in two hours which will take you to Turkey’.”**

The main respondent warned his fellow companion that they would be pushed-back to Turkey, as he had heard of this story happening before. The second man, however, was certain that this could not possibly happen to him for his documents were in order and had permission to stay in Greece. Still, the main respondent told his companion: **“If the van comes, they will take you to Turkey. It doesn’t matter if you have documents, if you have asylum or whatever. They will take you.”**

**“I can’t stay here to be taken to Turkey”**, the attestant explained to the fellow Afghan man. When the port security guard left for a few minutes, the respondent rushed to jump the fence and flee the port, leaving his travel comrade behind and not knowing whatever ended up happening to him, but convinced that he was pushed-back to Turkey regardless of his legal status.

09/09/2020

## “I FAINTED WHILE THEY WERE TAKING ME BACK TO THE BOAT. ”

**Date and time:** September 9, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Venice, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.4383649, 12.307342

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 24 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Two Italian police officers and two Italian port security guards. Once in Greece, unknown number of Greek officials without a uniform.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

*The respondent, a 24-year-old man from Afghanistan, described that on the evening of the 8th of September of 2020, he was hiding under a truck that was inside a ship making its way toward Italy. The ship arrived at the Port of Venice at approximately 10:00 in the morning of the 9th of September of 2020. The respondent left the truck and attempted without success to leave the Port of Venice on foot.*

Referring to a map of the Port he recalled the the location he was in was surrounded by water in three ways, with only one street as the possibility to exit, which is, in turn, controlled by three check-in points. He described at this point that one street divides in two, one of the two paths leading to the police station. The respondent claimed to have been chased by two policemen inside a vehicle and two security guards – without a vehicle – inside the port for approximately one hour.

***“They were good people. They did not touch me, they spoke good to me”, claims the young man.***

After being apprehended, the officers told him to relax and the respondent asked for water. He was given a water bottle. Consequently, they brought him another water bottle ordering him to wash his face. He did so, and he was then given a mask to protect against COVID-19. He was asked to sit inside the police vehicle and then taken to the police station inside the port. Once in the police station -still inside the port – the officers asked for his name, last name, mother’s name, father’s name and recorded his fingerprints into a computer.

Approximately 30-40 minutes after his arrival to the station, he was told to get inside the vehicle again, and was taken inside a vessel in the port. The respondent showed confusion about the type of vessel he was taken into but mentioned it could have been a “super-fast boat”. He claims to have begged not to be deported, but his plead was not listened to. He was taken inside a room on the boat, after which the young man described having fainted due to tiredness, lack of oxygen and nutrients.

He recalled being taken inside an ambulance 20 minutes later. Reportedly, doctors checked him and injected an unknown liquid in his veins through his arm. There was a black-out in his memory until he woke up on a hospital bed six hours later, after which he remained in the hospital bed and was not given any food.

After some time, the police came to find him and told him to go with them. They had been waiting for him in the hospital. Once again, he begged not to be deported, but the officers did not talk back to him. He was taken to a boat again and put inside a small room, after which the door was locked behind him. He stressed the fact that it was very cold inside that room. The respondent let the authorities and port staff know that he had not eaten, and ten minutes later he was brought a sandwich and a water bottle.

Inside the room in the boat, which had walls of iron, there was no bed. The size of the room was that of approximately a medium-sized van. The respondent slept on the floor for about six hours and waited until the boat arrived in Igoumenitsa approximately 10 hours later. He had access to a toilet after he requested it once the door reopened when the destination was reached. He was handcuffed before and after going to the toilet, and then taken to a police station, where he spent one hour and had his police paperwork checked – even though it was only a copy since his original paperwork was lost during the journey. During that time he was still handcuffed and sitting on a chair while officers typed on a computer.

As an important detail, the young man mentions that the officers were dressed “normally”, that perhaps they were secret police. The two officers wore a white T-shirt, one of them seemed to be around 35 years old. “They spoke good to me, asking questions normally”, he says.

He was then ordered to go to Athens and his handcuffs unlocked. He agreed, but once they were in the bus station, he said he will take a bus to Patras instead. He paid for the ticket on his own and did so. The journey to Patras was three hours long.

**21/07/2020**

## **“GROUP OF 23 PEOPLE CAUGHT BY ITALIAN ARMY”**

**Date and time:** July 21, 2020 18:00

**Location:** Ferneti, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.700470555072, 13.831441428311

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 23 of which 10 were pushed back person(s), age: > 18 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 3 Italian army officers + 4 cars police (at Italian border)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Independent person

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The two respondents, both from Pakistan, left the Bosnian city of Bihać on the 5th of July in the hopes of continuing through Croatia and Slovenia on towards Italy. They stated that they arrived in Trieste on the 20th of July. They were in a group of 23 people, including 3 persons underage and “3 sick people”.

The respondents stated they entered Italy from Slovenia near the **SP16 road** outside of the border village of Muggia at around 1:00 am on the 20th of July but they were immediately stopped by Italian officers described as ‘army forces’ – consisting of one jeep and four officers – near the railway overpass of Santa Barbara (Muggia).

These authorities were likely part of the *Operazione Strade Sicure* deployment to the border area. The respondent described that shortly after being apprehended, four police cars and a number of officers wearing blue uniforms arrived to the scene.

The group was then taken to the “Ferneti tent” by these officers [**45.699954, 13.830690**] where they spent all day long. The respondents described that they had their fingerprints (10 fingers) and a handprint recorded here. One doctor arrived to check the temperature, as a prevention measure related to COVID-19. The respondents stated that one of the group was vomiting and other 2 persons had “knee problems” so these persons had the permission to stay in Italy. Two translators were reportedly present that explained the documents that the group had to sign (“10bis” illegal entrance in Italy and asylum seekers request).

Their mobile phones were taken by the police but they were allowed to talk to each other. The respondents stated that neither group of officers used physical violence in their interactions, however food was provided to the group only once in 24 hours.

The original group were composed of 23 people: the 3 minors, the 3 “sick people” and another 7 people were allowed to start the procedure to claim asylum and stayed in Italy, but the rest of the group were not permitted.

Around 6:00 pm, the remaining 10 people from the group were taken in a van and brought to Slovenia where Slovenian police officers took the group.

The remaining ten people then spent 3 hours in Slovenian police station, detained inside a closed room. Here, they again had their fingerprints taken again before they were brought to the “deportation center” of Veliko Otok in Postojna [**45.784967, 14.194817**] where they spent one week (in a single room). They were provided food and hygiene services but not given any clean clothes.

After one week they were transferred to the second floor of the complex: one room for approximately four people, in total there were 25 people for the same block. They spent five days there. They stated no physical violence was used.

After five days, they were communicated that they would be transferred to an open camp in Ljubljana but actually they were forced to sign a paper that turned out to be an expulsion document. This group and an additional 10 people were all brought to Croatian border of Obrezje (**45.847949, 15.691544**). The Croatian police took the group – in total 20 people – and detained them in a building near the border where they spent between 18 and 20 hours without food. They had access to some water during this time.

Eventually, they were brought back to Bosnian border where Croatian police officers took the t-shirts, shoes, phones and money of the group. The officers – ten in total – wore black clothes and balaclava masks and beat the guys with batons, discharged their firearms in the air and left the group near to the border in the greater Velika Kladuša area. On date of 5th of August the guys arrived back in Velika Kladuša.

**20/07/2020**

## **“CHAIN PUSH-BACK FROM TRIESTE TO BIH”**

**Date and time:** July 20, 2020 11:00

**Location:** Caught from Italian special forces in a park near the centre of Trieste and pushed back from Croatian police near the Glina river

**Coordinates:** 45.23558838887845, 15.89851407320284

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 26 person(s), age: 20-40 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, gunshots, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 10 italian police officers + italian police officers to take personal informations; 7 slovenian police officers + police officers in slovenian closed camp; 7 croatia police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Independent person

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On July 20th, two groups of 26 persons in total (all from Pakistan) were apprehended by Italian authorities – ten officers in all – in a park within the Italian city of Trieste. According to the respondent the authorities, who were described as wearing specialized camouflaged uniforms, stopped the group in the park and, after some time, loaded them into different police vans and drove them to the community of **Ferneti** [45.698004, 13.827726], straddling the border area

with Slovenia. In this area, nearby the border station, there is a section recently built consisting of a large tent in which interviews are made along with corona test and pre-pushback procedures.

The group spent between four and five hours in this location during which time the Italian police officers took their fingerprints (all fingers), photo ID and asked for personal information and **they signed an Identification Report.**

The group had the opportunity to speak with a cultural mediator from Afghanistan who reportedly blackmailed them, **asking money in order to request asylum in Italy in exchange.**

After some time, they were handed over the Slovenia police officers (7 officers) at 5 pm that brought them to the Center for Foreigners in Postojna (**45.785654, 14.194854**) where they took their fingerprints, photo ID and asked for personal information. At this location, they received food and a place to sleep for the night.

The day after (July 21st), in the late morning, the group described being transported in vehicles to the Croatian border with Slovenia, at which point they were transferred over to Croatia police officers (7 "regular" officers) at around 1:00 pm. These officers then put them into three other vans on the Croatian side of the border.

The 26 people were inside the vans until the evening, with the possibility to go out several times one-by-one. They did not receive any kind of information and they did not receive any food or water during this time.

After this, the group was then driven back to the Croatian border with Bosnia. The respondent claimed that, during the transportation, most of them did not feel well due to poor driving conditions.

At 9:00 pm on July 21st, the group was taken out of the vehicles in a secluded area of the Bosnian-Croatian border near the Bosnian village of Poljana, bordering the Glina River, at which point the group encountered violence from the Croatian police officers at the site.

The respondent claimed that him and his friends were beaten, insulted, kicked, a tear gas was lit and a policeman shot in the air during this time. Their personal belongings were also destroyed by the police, who took almost 100 euros from them. Finally, after this ordeal, the group were left to cross the border with just t-shirts, trousers and no shoes.

**18/07/2020**

**"AFTER TWO HOURS TRAVELLING, THE CARS REACHED THE BORDER TO SLOVENIA AND THE ITALIAN POLICE OFFICERS HANDED THE RESPONDENTS OVER TO THE SLOVENIAN POLICE"**

**Date and time:** July 18, 2020 18:00

**Location:** Staro Selo Topusko, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.224769, 15.959686

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia

**Demographics:** 15 (original group: 34 people, of which 17 minors) person(s), age: 19-21 years old, from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 15 Italian police officers (2 female officers) with blue uniforms and beige and black uniforms, 2 police vans, 1 police car; 1 unidentified Italian man with a gun but no official uniform; 25 Italian police officers wearing blue uniforms and beige and black uniforms, 5 police cars; unknown number of Slovenian police officers at the border between Italy and Slovenia, unknown number of Slovenian police cars; 1 male and 1 female Slovenian police officers with blue uniforms; 4 Slovenian male police officers, 2 police vans; 7 Croatian police officers (1 female), 2 police cars, 1 police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water, forcing to undress, frisking

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In this case, a group of 58 people from Afghanistan were stopped in the Italian city of Trieste by the Italian police, around 11:00 in the morning on the 17th of July 2020. Of this group, 24 managed to escape, whereas 34 were caught by the officers. The group of concern in this report consisted of 34 Afghan males, of which 17 minors and 17 adults, aged 19-21.

Approximately 15 Italian police officers, two of which were female officers, with two police vans and one police car, stopped the group which was walking on the street, heading to a bus station. According to the description given by the respondent, some of the officers were wearing blue uniforms and others were wearing beige and black uniforms. The officers ordered to the group to sit on the side of the street, in a "sunny area". The respondent described the police behaviour as "respectful", nonetheless, police forced the group of respondents to stay silent for more or less two hours, by ordering them "not to speak between each other". The officers also checked the contents of the respondents' backpacks.

After waiting for two hours, a vehicle came and the group was loaded on it. Two of the 15 police officers were with them. The bus drove for around 20 minutes and stopped at a place which the respondent describes as a sort of camp, with gates and fences, close to which or in which there was a police station.

**"Behind of camp it was one police station",** says the respondent.

Once inside the police station, the whole group of respondents was checked by two doctors, who "checked our all body and corona". After this, the group was divided and went through administrative procedures at the police station. The respondent had the fingerprints of all fingers of both hands taken, as well as pictures of his face. He was also asked for personal

information such as name, surname, date of birth, country of origin, mother's and father's name.

The respondent described interacting with with a translator who spoke Pashto and another unidentified Italian man, with whom the respondent had a long oral interview, which lasted around 1 and a half hours, according to his memory. The unidentified Italian man had a handgun but no official uniform, so the respondent could not determine if he was a police officer or not.

**“They ask all my problems what we were in Afghanistan and how I come from Afghanistan so I was like big interview”,** says the respondent.

As the respondent refers, several times he asked for asylum to the translator but the translator did not communicate this to the other man, as well as many other questions or requests which the respondent made to him. *“They do not give answer, just they laugh”,* says the respondent. Afterwards, the respondent was given *“five”* documents written in Italian, whose contents he was unable to understand because of the language, and was forced to sign them quickly.

**“When we signed the documents we don't had time for look to paper, we signed and when we signed one paper translator told us “this is asylums paper” and after we signed one another paper he told us “this paper is from illegal that you come to Italy” [and so on]”,** says the respondent.

After the whole procedure, the whole group was reunified in the afternoon, at around 14:00 in a big tent placed at the back of the police station. There, the group got some food and had rest for around four hours; since it was early in the afternoon, the temperature inside the tent was extremely hot. Later in the evening, at around 18:00, a group of approximately 25 Italian police officers wearing blue uniforms and black and beige uniforms came with the translator to the tent and woke the group up. The respondents were asked if they wanted to remain in Italy and all of them answered affirmatively, but only the 17 minors and two adults who previously had had their fingerprints taken in Greece were allowed to stay. All the remaining group-members, 15 people in total, were then divided into five groups of three, loaded in five police cars and left the station.

After two hours travelling, the vehicles arrived to the Italian border with Slovenia at which point the Italian police officers handed the group-members over to Slovenian authorities. That is, on the 17th of July 2020 around 20:00, the Italian police pushed the group of respondents back to Slovenia, by directly consigning them to Slovenian police officers. There, the group-members were loaded on the Slovenian police's cars and transported to a police station. The group-members did not know where they were travelling to. At the station there were lots of police officers, male and female, wearing blue uniforms. The respondent describes as *“bad”* the treatment received at the police station.

At the station, the group was divided, and the respondent remained alone with two other friends and two police officers, one male and one female, who wore blue uniforms. Under the presence of a Slovenian translator who spoke Pashto, the three group-members underwent another oral interview on *“how we reached the country and personal information”*. Also in this case, the respondent asked to the officers *“give me stay”* [asylum], but he received no answer. Then, they had their fingerprints taken as well as pictures of their faces and were asked to sign some *“four”* documents in Slovenian language, which they could not understand. After this, the

respondents were asked to undress and, completely naked, were frisked by the male police officer for around five minutes, then they could dress up again.

**“They said me take off your everything and told me set up and stand up, I don’t know why”**, refers the respondent, who also says that he felt harassed by the officer.

The whole group of 15 respondents spent the night at the police station, sleeping in a foul-smelling and cold cell where there were no beds and no blankets. Not receiving water from the officers, the respondent recalled having to drink water from the toilet which was inside the cell. At the police station, the Slovenian officers withheld the documents which the Italian police had released to the respondents.

Around 7:00 in the morning, 4 male police officers wearing blue uniforms loaded the respondents in two police vans without giving them any information on where they were heading to. After four hours travelling, the vans reached the border to Croatia and the respondents were handed over to seven Croatian officers, among which there was “*a bad woman*”, according to the respondent. With this exchange of people, the Slovenian officers pushed the group of respondents back to Croatia by directly consigning them to the Croatian police, on the 18th of July 2020, around 11.00 in the morning. In a border police building at the border, the officers withheld the respondents’ money, phones and cigarettes. Since some of his friends did not understand English and could not understand the officers’ orders, the respondent translated for them but the female police officer accused him to be “*the leader*” [the smuggler] of the group. Accordingly, he was ordered to undress and frisked.

After this, the whole group was loaded into one police van and went on a six-hour long travel which ended up at the border to Bosnia Herzegovina. An additional two other police cars and all the seven officers travelled to the border with the van. The van had no windows and it was impossible for the respondents to see outside. The air at the back of the van became extremely hot and the respondents had no water with them. The respondent also reports the police officers driving recklessly. The van did not make any stop until it reached the border to Bosnia, in the late afternoon on the 18th of July 2020.

The respondents stepped out of the van one by one and were told “*you go back to Bosnia, don’t come again*”. Some of the respondents were beaten up by the officers who used their batons and then, around 19:00, the group was pushed back to Bosnia Herzegovina.

For maybe ten kilometers the group of respondents walked under the pouring rain in the jungle and after many hours walking they reached the city of Velika Kladusa, BiH and then moved to the city of Bihac, BiH, on the 19th of July 2020.

**15/07/2020**

## **“CHAIN PUSHBACK FROM ITALY TO BIH”**

**Date and time:** July 15, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Piazza della Liberta, Trieste

**Coordinates:** 45.657029059899, 13.772412857392

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 15-45 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, pepper spray, gunshots, dog attacks, reckless driving

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent left Bosnia around July 1st with a group of 15 people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Afghanistan. On the morning of 15th July 2020, they crossed the Italian border.

Upon crossing the border into Italian territory, the group split up into smaller groups to avoid being captured. The respondent, along with 4 others from Pakistan, including 2 minors of about 14-15 years old, went to the city center of Trieste. When they reached Piazza della Libertà (by the central train station) they sat on the benches to rest. They were approached by 3 volunteers, two females and one male, from Linnea d'Ombra. The volunteers dressed their wounds and injuries.

While they were talking with volunteers, they saw a black police van with tinted windows and 'POLIZIA' written on the side. Two police officers wearing civilian clothes approached them and introduced themselves as 'secret police'. They said that once they were finished with the volunteers, they would take them to a camp. They spoke with the volunteers as well, but the respondent is not sure what they said as he does not speak Italian.

The police briefly interviewed all 5 group-members, asking about some details of their route, number of people in the group and whether there were any minors. They also asked them if they wished to stay in Italy. All five confirmed and expressed intention to seek asylum in Italy.

The police officers were speaking in "bad English" mixing in some Italian words, resulting in limited comprehension by the respondent. After the questioning they were told to get in the van to go to camp.

After a 15-20 minute drive, they arrived at a large police station, which the respondent thought to be located near the city centre (exact location unknown). Inside they saw other migrants sitting in the waiting area, handcuffed. The police officers inside looked like 'regular police' with blue uniforms with Italian flags on them. They interacted with 4-5 different officers who performed different duties. Manual fingerprints were taken. When they asked what the purpose was, the police didn't reply and spoke Italian with each other. They were given some (3 or 4) papers in Italian and told they needed to sign them to go to camp. The group asked for a translator, but the police said this wasn't needed because the papers were 'not anything against you'. The intention to seek asylum was again expressed by all 5 members of the group.

Other officers performed body-searches and confiscated their phones, which had dead batteries. After the search they asked for their phones back and the officers said they will give them back in camp (which never happened). They asked if they can contact their friends or family but this request was denied.

After signing the papers, the group were put into a room and given some cookies and juice. 2-3 hours later they were loaded into a van by 2 different police officers and then told they would be transferred to a camp. Before leaving the station they were handcuffed, police used 'humiliating language' and slapped them on the back on their heads. The two minors were beaten with police batons and started crying. They were roughly loaded into a white van with grills over the windows. 'From the inside you couldn't see outside' and there was no fresh air. When they asked where they were heading the police officer told them to 'shut up'. After 2-3 hours drive they were unloaded from the van in a hilly area. The officers hit them with the batons and gave them until the count of 5 to run. The minors were badly hurt 'crying and screaming from pain'.

They ran to the other side, about one kilometre from this location, where they saw a van they didn't recognize as a police van. When they came closer 3 shots were fired from nearby the vehicle and 2 Slovenian officers in light blue uniforms told them to stop and come to them. They were searched and handcuffed. Police hit them with batons and shouted at them to get into the van. There was no direct observed interaction between Italian and Slovenian police.

After a 15-20 minute drive, they arrived at an old building that didn't look like a police station, but there were officers present, wearing light-navy uniforms with Slovenian flags and some emblem on them. Slovenian police took fingerprints and gave each of them 3 papers to sign. An Urdu translator was present but didn't answer any of their questions, and didn't tell them what the papers were. He only told them to stay silent and sign the papers. They expressed intention to seek asylum several times but each time the police and the translator ignored them. One officer told them they had no right to asylum and that they would be deported to Croatia. After that the group of 5 were placed in a locked room without windows or toilets where they spent the night. They weren't provided food or allowed to use the toilet. Some people were asking to use the toilet but the police laughed at them. They asked what would happen to them, and were not given a response. In the room they saw other people of different nationalities. The respondent doesn't know exactly how long he spent in the building, they arrived and were detained till the following morning (16th July 2020), up to approximately 06:00.

At around 06:00, they were driven to the Croatian border to a large building described as 'concrete barracks'. More Slovenian and Croatian police officers were present. Slovenian police unloaded them from the van and beat one by one with black police batons. After that they were brought to the Croatian side where Slovenian and Croatian officers spoke and exchanged paperwork. The respondent didn't understand what they were saying.

The group of 5 were received by officers wearing dark blue t-shirts with emblems and trousers and heavy black boots. They had the group lie on the ground and handcuffed their hands behind their backs with zip-ties causing them a lot of pain. There were 30-35 other migrants handcuffed and lying down on the ground on the Croatian side. Police didn't ask them any questions and they were too afraid to say anything. They were only warned that if they have

something on them they should give it to the police, otherwise they will 'find it, I beat them badly and kill them'.

While they were being searched some other officers were standing on the side watching. During the search they were kicked and hit with batons. They spent around 1 and a half hours in the barracks, since there were already more than 30 people there when his group arrived and the officers were waiting for back-up.

2 police vans arrived with 10-12 officers. Some of them were not regular forces and instead wore black clothes, heavy black boots and balaclavas. They started beating them one by one as they lied on the ground. They had black police batons wrapped with barbed wire wrapped around, they hit them with those and kicked them on the back with heavy boots.

After the beating they started putting all of the people from the barracks into the vans. The respondent was loaded into one vehicle with 9 other people, 4 from his original group and 5 more from the building. They couldn't breathe properly due to insufficient ventilation and some people were sick and throwing up, but the police didn't stop. The ride lasted 4-5 hours.

When they arrived at their destination there were 3-5 police officers present already and they also saw a small Croatian checkpoint with an officer watching. There were also other migrants present at the site.

The intention to seek asylum was expressed to Croatian police before being pushed back to Bosnian territory. One Croatian officer with 3 stars on his uniform spoke English to them, saying they crossed the border illegally and would be returned to Bosnia.

They were all put into a queue of people of around 50-60 other migrants (all people from the barracks plus the group present at the border when they arrived). Alongside the queue, around 5 officers stood with pepper spray containers. One of them held a loudly-barking German Shepherd on a lead. The respondent and others were told to run back to Bosnia after a countdown to 5 and 3 shots fired in the air, police started shouting and hitting people and pepper sprayed them. The respondent's group was at the front of the line and escaped spraying but they saw some other people being hurt. The dog was released on them and was trying to bite them.

After being pushed back to Bosnia, they were at the top of the mountain which they recognised from previous experience. They walked to the city of Ripac in the territory of Bosnia. From there they walked towards Bihac. Some people in the group were very tired and suggested to rest, so they rested until sundown. At this point, they were 40-50 people who were deported all together from Croatian police.

06/07/2020

## “AROUND 17:30, 10 PEOPLE PUSHED BACK TO SLOVENIA BY THE ITALIAN POLICE”

**Date and time:** July 6, 2020 23:00

**Location:** Grabarska, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.143023, 15.772111

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia

**Demographics:** 10 (original group size: 35) person(s), age: 20-40 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** 5 Italian police officers, 10 Italian army officers, male and female, 1 police car; unspecified number of Slovenian police officers, 1 police car and 1 police van; 2 Slovenian officers wearing civil clothes, 1 Slovenian policewoman; 2 Slovenian police officers, 1 police van; 2 Croatian police officers, 1 police van; 12 Croatian officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water, documents withheld

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondents in this case, a group of 35 people, six of which minors and all the rest aged 20-40, from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan, were walking separated in small groups on the streets in the Italian city of Trieste, when they were stopped by five Italian police officers with one police car and 10 Italian army officers, men and women, around 9:00 am, on the 5th of July 2020.

The officers shouted orders in Italian to the respondents and made them sit on the side of the street for around one hour, according to the respondent's memory. The group was frisked by the officers and had their backpacks checked as well. After one hour, a bus arrived and the respondents were loaded on it and driven to a place which the respondent describes as a “close army camp”, close to which there was a “park” and another “open camp”. Two of the 15 officers travelled in the bus with the group.

At the camp, the respondent interacted with two police officers, one male and one female, wearing official blue uniforms. A Pakistani translator, whom the respondent describes as “bad”, mediated the whole administrative procedure at the police station.

**“We want speak with translator but he not speak with me, no listen and no care”, says the respondent referring to the translator's behaviour.**

The respondents were asked for personal information and had the fingerprints of all fingers of both hands taken, as well as pictures of their faces. The respondent did ask for asylum but the officers told him “no asylum”. The officers gave to the respondents a document written in

Italian, which they could not understand. At the camp, the respondents did receive some biscuits to eat but were denied water.

Around 5:30 pm on the same day, a total of 10 individuals were pushed back to Slovenia by the Italian police. Three were loaded in a police car driven by one male and one female Italian police officer and the other seven were loaded in a police van. After an approximately 15 minute-long trip, the group reached the border to Slovenia. They waited in the Italian police car for around half an hour, and could step out of it only when an unspecified number of Slovenian police officers arrived with a police van and a police car, loaded all 10 individuals and drove them to a police station. The respondent does not remember for how long they travelled.

Before accessing the police station, the whole group was frisked "*body and clothes*". Once inside, they interacted with two people, supposedly officers, wearing "*civil clothes*", who asked them for personal information. A policewoman took their fingerprints as well as pictures of their faces. The respondents were also asked how they reached Italy. At the station, the Slovenian police withheld the document which the Italian police had released to the respondents.

They spent the whole night at the police station and, around 12:00 noon, on the afternoon on the 6th of July 2020, they were loaded in a police van driven by two Slovenian police officers. The group of respondents did not know where they were travelling to and they could not see outside, since no window was at the back of the van. According to the respondent, the trip lasted many hours, maybe six or seven, after which the van reached the Croatian border. There, around 7:00 pm on the 6th of July 2020, the Slovenian police pushed the group of 10 back to Croatia, by handing them over to the Croatian police.

The group were loaded in another police van driven by two Croatian police officers, which headed directly to the border to Bosnia Herzegovina (approximate coordinates 45.143023, 15.772111).

***"This time very darkness, I not see and I am too much thinking police hitting this time",***  
*says the respondent, explaining how he feared to be beaten up heavily at the border.*

There, around 12 Croatian officers were waiting in line for the group to come. The officers beat them with the batons and then the respondents were pushed back to Bosnia Herzegovina, around 11:00 pm, according to the respondent. After walking for around two hours and half, the respondents reached the city of Velika Kladusa, BiH, on the 7th of July 2020.

06/07/2020

## “PUSHED BACK FROM AN ITALIAN TRAIN STATION AFTER BUYING TICKETS”

**Date and time:** July 6, 2020 20:00

**Location:** On the border near the area of Velika Kladuša

**Coordinates:** 45.225048851698, 15.864183367463

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 24- 26 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** unknow the numbers: normal italian police + italian army + slovenian officers + croatian officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** Independent person, No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent states that him and two friends were deported from the Trieste Central Railway Station to Slovenia and then, by chain, to Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH).The respondent recalled that he and his group of two other friends had left BiH several days before to attempt “the game”.

At 2 AM of 5th of July the guys managed to arrive to the Trieste Central Railway Station (**Piazza della Libertà, 11, 34132 Trieste**) where they bought a train ticket to Milano Centrale for the day after.

The next morning the returned to the station area around 8:00 am in order to wait for their train. At around this time, the small group was sighted and approached by an Italian police patrol that the respondent referred to as “special forces” (Note: This was the Italian army – “Operazione Strade Sicure”, shown in the image at the top of this report). Subsequently, the group was apprehended by these officers, put in a jeep, and brought to “a tent” somewhere in the city – the respondent did not know the exact location they were brought to.

In that tent “the special forces” took the fingerprints of each group-member and, at around 3:00 pm, were driven to the Slovenian border and transferred over to Slovenian police officers.

After this the respondent described that they were taken to a nearby station where the spent the night. There, the Slovenian authorities took again the group-members fingerprints – but this time just one finger. The next morning, at around 8:00 am, the group was loaded into another vehicle and driven to the Croatian border with Slovenia. At around 10:00 am, they were transferred over to the custody of Croatian authorities.

The respondent described that were closed in a Croatian police van for a long time after this – around 10 hours. During this time, they were allowed to go out of the van just two or three times to drink water.

Later that evening, the group of 3 persons left the station in the van and were transported back to the Bosnian border with Croatia, to a secluded area outside of Velika Kladuša. The men were taken out of the van at around 8:00 pm on the 6th of July and told to walk into Bosnia.

The respondent stated that the only document released to them during the time in custody was from the Italian authorities, however that document was taken by the Slovenian police later on.

11/06/2020

## “CHAIN PUSHBACK FROM MUGGIA (ITALY) TO BOSNIA”

**Date and time:** June 11, 2020 23:00

**Location:** Muggia (ITA)

**Coordinates:** 45.604241039436396, 13.767636931421666

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 18+ , from: Afghanistan, Morocco, India

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Italian officers described as "army police", 2x patrol cars, Slovenian officers with 1 van, Croatian officers with 1 van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

**Even after claiming asylum in the Italian town of Muggia, this group of Indian men were collectively expelled to Slovenia. From there, they were “chain” pushed back through Croatia into Bosnia-Herzegovina, completing three illegal removals in the space of 48 hours.**

On Thursday 11th June 2020, in the **central square of Muggia (ITA)**, a group of five Indian men were stopped by Italian police. The apprehension occurred at around 23:00. The authorities, described by the respondents as “army police”, took the five men to a barracks where they carried out an identification and expressed their intent to claim asylum. This was carried out with the assistance of a translator. The groups fingerprints were taken as well as photographs.

The respondent recalls how the police shift changed and they spent the night detained in the facility. The following morning (12th June 2020), the respondents were awakened by another shift change, occurring at around 08:00/09:00. The detained transit group received water, biscuits and bread to share among themselves. After that, the police gave a document to each, informing them that they would be removed to Slovenia.

Around 14:00 that same day, the Italian police transported them with two state police cars, in which there were two policemen in each. The group were brought a short distance to the Slovenian border. The Slovenian police took the document previously issued by the Italian police and brought the five men to a facility where they also took their fingerprints and photo. In addition, the Slovenian police officers seized the groups belongings (cell phones, wallets, etc.). Afterwards, at around 16:00/17:00 the group were transported by van away from the facility.

They were taken to an area referred to by the group as the "deportation center". The group spent the night there with 200 other people who had also been removed back from Italy to Slovenia under similar processes. The following morning (13th June 2020), the Slovenian police took the group back to the same facility/station as the day before, where they gave them back all their belongings except the cellphones. There was no explanation given for this seizure of possessions.

From this original point of detention, the group were then transported in a van which took them to the Croatian border, to a Croatian border police station close to Rijeka (HR). They were stopped there for about 2-3 hours, together with 25 other people, of Afghan and Moroccan origin, who were also taken by the police close to the Croatian-Slovenian border. The group said that the Croatian police were not violent with them but seized the phones of all people of Moroccan origin (the Indian men had none since the Slovenian police had taken them). After a wait lasting about 2-3 hours, the five Indian men, together with seven other people, therefore a group of about 12 people, were driven by the Croatian police to a stretch of the border near the town of **Bužim**, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The final pushback across the green border into BiH occurred in mid afternoon on 13th June 2020.

25/05/2020

## “TRIPLE PUSHBACK: ITALY > SLOVENIA > CROATIA > BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA”

**Date and time:** May 25, 2020 05:00

**Location:** Draga Sant'Elia (Italy)

**Coordinates:** 45.61986355572916, 13.888439898771265

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 14 person(s), age: 18+ , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 3 Italian "special forces" officers, Slovenian and Croatian police (vans from all three respective forces)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

**The group had only just arrived in Italy – to what they thought was safety – when Italian authorities took them, detained them, and set off a chain expulsion which would eventually land the men back in Bosnia-Herzegovina from where they had first left.**

On 25th May 2020 at around 05.00 they were apprehended in Draga Sant'Elia (Italy), having arrived after a long journey from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The people in transit, of Pakistani origin, had left in hope of safe passage to Italy as a group of 42 people, including two unaccompanied minors.

Fourteen of the new arrivals (including the three interviewees who provided this report) were taken from the Draga Sant'Elia area, by three Italian officers and transferred to a closed tent site. In this place, the group of 14 were fingerprinted and given the indication they would be able to pursue an asylum claim in Italy.

During their stay they were issued a paper document which they had to sign. The document was from the State Police (Trieste border police sector), and is the *“report of identification, election/declaration of domicile and appointment of the defender made by person under investigation.”*

At around 15:00 on the same day the group of 14 were removed by van and brought to the Slovenian border. There they were handed over to Slovenian officials and taken to a police station. The people in transit were held for 24 hours in the Slovenian police station, where they were also fingerprinted.

Afterwards, on the afternoon of the 26th May 2020, the group were removed and handed over to the Croatian police at a BCP on the HR-SLO border. The group were detained for a further

two hours by Croatian police. After this they were driven to a stretch of the green border with Bosnia-Herzegovina (close to the town of Velika Kladusa) and ordered back across. Once back in Bosnia, the three travelled back to Bihac and were hosted in the TRC Bira.

24/05/2020

## “PUSH-BACK FROM ANCONA TO IGOUMENITSA”

**Date and time:** May 24, 2020 04:00

**Location:** Port of Igoumenitsa

**Coordinates:** 39.48856310000001, 20.25966159999999

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 28 , from: Kurdistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground

**Police involved:** 4 Italian police officers; 1 army italian officer; at least 2 greece port police officers;

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On Friday 22 May, the respondent described entering into a truck in Igoumenitsa, Greece which later entered inside a Minoas Line ferry which left the port in the direction of Italy very late in the evening. After 13 hours of travel, at which point it was May 23rd at around 11:00 am, the man arrived to the port of Ancona, Italy.

As the truck was passing the control checkpoint after leaving the ferry, a woman in a grey uniform discovered the man. The respondent was not able to identify what was written on the woman's uniform. She then called three men over who, according to the respondent wore civilian clothes but carried themselves as policemen. It is inferred here that these were plain-clothes officers. These men were violent towards the man and started to hit him and pushed him on the ground. After that, the men brought the respondent into a nearby room which was "like a jail" according to the respondent. This room was still inside the port. This exchange occurred around 1 pm. While detained, the men gave the respondent a piece of bread and some water.

The respondent – who does not speak English (*the testimony was taken with the help of a translator*) – told us that during his detainment he repeated multiple times with his basic English: "My family Rome, my family Rome, my family Rome". There was not an official translator present at any point, therefore the police officers tried to communicate with him in English and Italian. The respondent mentioned during the course of our interview that he has

wife and 3 years old child living in Rome, which is what he wanted to communicate to the officers.

After 1 hour spent within the room detained, Italian authorities came and brought him to a nearby office room "with computers" and forced him to give his fingerprints (10 fingers), took picture of his face, and as logged all his personal information: name, family name, father and mother name, date of birth, ect.

No translator came at this point and all this information was taken without the man's consent. According to the respondent, no one mentioned anything to him about his right to claim asylum. Although he did not express the intention to seek asylum, he was constantly asking about rejoining with his family in Rome. The respondent told us he did not know what was going on during the entire process and he was scared but also that the police repeat many times to him "Ok, ok, no problem, no problem" and "Relax relax" during the procedure. At the end of the procedure he was forced to sign a paper in Italian, which he does not read or speak. He did not know what he was signing.

Afterwards, a police officer handcuffed him and brought him onto a ferry which according to the respondent, was part of the "Grimaldi" fleet. A police woman released his hands and closed him in a room which, according to the respondent: "...is the room where they locked illegal people". He reported that while being led into the ferry, a person dressed in army fatigues was making fun of him, pointing at him, laughing, and repeating: "Greece, Greece".

According to the respondent, the ferry arrived to port of Igoumenitsa at around 4:00 am on Sunday the 24th of May. He was brought by a white van to an "investigation room" inside the Port Authority and questioned further (Igoumenitsa Port Authority S.A. Ladochori 461 00, Greece).

During this time, Greek police officers, abused him physically, forcing him to get down on his knees. They tied his hands behind his back and told him:

*"If you stand up your head, we punch you"*

When he was trying to wipe the hair off his face, a police officer was described as slapping him. The respondent states that the port police gave some documents to the other police, according to I. there was deportation paper from Italy back to Greece.

Around 9 am on Sunday 24th he was released and he went back to the "Igoumenitsa jungle" pictured below.

**23/04/2020**

## **"PUSHBACK ANCONA PORT - THU. 23.04.20"**

**Date and time:** April 23, 2020 20:00

**Location:** Ancona Port

**Coordinates:** 43.62069437724259, 13.50889870073991

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 18, 21 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?:** No

**Violence used:** pushing people to the ground, insulting, sexual assault, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 6, 2 female, 4 male

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent reported that on Thursday the 23rd of April, at 8:00 pm the truck he and his friend had been hiding inside of since the previous day (22nd of April – 7:00 pm) had arrived in Ancona port via a ferry from Patras. At this point, the truck was subject to a police search after leaving the ship in Ancona Port.

During the search of the truck the two men were discovered by two Italian policemen who then shouted at them and told them to get out of their hiding places. After the men left the truck their arms were twisted and they were punched on the ground forcefully. Their arms were then handcuffed. A group of six other policemen were standing at the scene and observing the arrest.

While being shouted at, three policemen took the men to a police car that was parked nearby and drove them to a nearby police station where they arrived after a short drive.

At the police station, two officers continued shouting at them and pushed them into the police station. Both men were then searched in a separated room and forced to undress themselves. After this, they were put into a single prison cell where two other men were also detained.

After some time, two policemen took both men out of the cell and forced them roughly to give their fingerprints and make photos of their faces. During the taking of the fingerprints, the policemen shouted at the men that they were going to deport them back to Greece.

After the taking of the fingerprints, the policemen showed the men a piece of paper that the men had to sign. Both indicated that they could not read the paper and needed to have a translator by their side. The policemen refused and shouted at them, ultimately pressuring them to give their signature arbitrarily. One of the men then signed the paper. The other refused so that one of the policemen signed on the mark where the man was supposed to leave his signature.

The two men stayed in the prison cell until the late afternoon of the next day (April 24th) without the opportunity to use the toilet although they told the policemen that they need to see the bathroom. They were then taken by two policemen to a ship where they were put into a small cabin whose door was then locked. In this cabin, the men stayed for a whole day before the door was then opened by a security staff of the ship.

After the door was unlocked the security staff escorted the men off the ship outside of which two Greek policemen were waiting for them. The policemen took both guys to a station nearby where their documents were photographed and they were detained for another hour.

Later the two men were escorted out of the port of Patras.

**26/02/2020**

## **“PUSH BACK FROM ITALY TO GREECE - THE BEATING WAS TOO MUCH AND I WAS VERY AFRAID”**

**Date and time:** February 26, 2020 05:00

**Location:** Inside the port of Venice

**Coordinates:** 45.43863373819858, 12.3075643883067

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 28 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, electric shock, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 Italian police officers, 2 cars, black uniform

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The transiting person (one Afghani man, 26 years old) left on board a ship from the port of Patras and arrived at the port of Venice on morning of the 26th of February.

At approximately 5:00 am, the individual jumped out of a red truck loaded with heavy carton boxes, which he had stowed away in. The truck was covered by a loose cover giving enough space to stay on top of the truck for a while. As he exited the vehicle, he was spotted by two policemen sitting in a car. The two officers, dressed in black, quickly grabbed him after a short chase and forcefully threw him onto the ground.

*“They pushed my face on ground again and again”*

While he was forced to the ground, the respondent described that one police officer struck him several times with a baton while the other administered electro-shocks to his body with a taser. After a short time, he heard one officer speaking on his radio and soon thereafter another police vehicle arrived with two more officers inside.

With their numbers now four, three of the officers were described as holding the respondent in place while the fourth officer kicked him against the left side of his body a single time. He was then moved by the police officers some meters away and was sat on the ground. He recalled that several dogs were brought in and surrounded him, barking at him heavily (the respondent described seeing six dogs). One of the officers went through the respondent's pockets briefly and found his phone which was then thrown into the nearby ocean.

After being searched, two of the officers took the respondent by the arm and led him back to their police car. The respondent described that in the car, the air condition was put on at a strong level, blowing excessive cold air against him. Both vehicles then went to a nearby police station, most likely located within the port itself.

Arriving at the police station, the person was taken inside by the two officers in his car, where one another police officer was waiting for them.

All three officers talked for a while before a fourth officer entered and led the respondent and the officers into another room. In this room, the respondent's fingerprints were taken, and a photo was taken of him. He then was brought to yet another room and told to sit down. After a short while, the officer who took his fingerprints returned to the room and asked the respondent a series of different questions. The respondent gave his name and said repeatedly that he wanted to seek asylum in Italy. There was no translator present. After being asked many questions which could not answer (and the officer taking notes on a form) the respondent was told to sign the form, which he then did.

During the interrogation the person asked twice to go to the bathroom, which was declined by the policeman.

The respondent described that he spent around three hours at the police station before some bread was offered to him which he ate. Shortly thereafter he was taken back to a ship and arrived back in Patras where he was handed over to two policemen wearing blue uniforms.

The two policemen in Patras took the respondent back to a gate in the port and told him not to come again, before setting him free.

**22/02/2020**

## **“PUSH-BACK FROM THE PORT OF BARI”**

**Date and time:** February 22, 2020 10:00

**Location:** Inside the port of Bari

**Coordinates:** 41.1327435, 16.8668087

**Pushback from:** Italy

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 23 , from: Egypt

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 2 italian police officers (they wear italian uniforms)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent along with one other individual, both males from Egypt, engaged in a transit attempt from the port of Patras on February 21st. The respondent described stowing away inside of a truck on the ferry which regularly leaves from the port.

After what was described as a period of 16 hours, the two men arrived to the Italian port of Bari. During this time, they were not sure about what was occurring outside of the truck and recalled being confused and afraid about what they should do. After some time, the truck began moving off of the ship to pass the standard border controls. At around this time, two police officers in "Italian uniforms" discovered the two men and forced them out of the vehicle. The two men were taken on foot by the officers to what was described as "a police office...inside [of] the port", around almost 10 minutes away on foot.

The respondent described that during this time, they did not understand what was going on at the station, the officers along and the other people in the offices spoke mainly in Italian. The officers spoke some English to the two men-in-transit however they did not speak English at all (this border violence report was taken with the use of a translator). There was not a translator available to the men in the station in Bari. The main officer interacting with the two men asked for their names and personal information (such as country of origin, age, etc.). The officers took their fingerprints (ten fingers). The two men did not receive any documents.

After a number of hours, the police men brought the two men-in-transit inside of a ferry (the respondent was not sure if it was the same one) and sealed them in a cabin. There was a toilet inside, and they were given food three times a day. According to the respondent, the ferry made a number of stops (perhaps in a Croatian port or an Albania port, the respondent described) and after 4 days they arrived back to Patras on February 25th where Greek policemen were waiting for the two men. They escorted them out of the port, freed them, and did not ask anything more from the two men.

**23/11/2019**

**"HE SAID, 'YES,' WHEN ASKED IF HE WANTED ASYLUM BUT THE TRANSLATOR TOLD HIM TO WRITE 'NO.'"**

**Date and time:** November 23, 2019 09:00

**Location:** Domio, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.611341, 13.828888

**Pushback from:** Italy, Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 24, 27, 42 , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 2 Italian authorities in blue uniforms with the Italian flag emblem on the arm; 1 female and 2 male Slovenian regular police, 1 Slovenian police van; 6 male Croatian officers in black uniforms and ski masks, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At 9.00 on 24th November 2019, two Italian police officers stopped a group of three Moroccan men in transit. The respondents had been walking for thirteen days and stopped in Domio (IT) to eat at a restaurant. While they were eating two Italian authorities in blue uniforms with the Italian flag emblem on their arm sleeves approached the group and told them to stop. One officer asked:

***“Where are your papers?”***

The respondent showed his documents, after which the group was apprehended and transported in an Italian police vehicle to the police station in Trieste (IT).

At the police station a female translator from Morocco asked the group if they wanted to express intent for asylum. The respondent said, “Yes”, but the translator told the respondent to write “No”. When asked, the respondent expressed his intention to look for employment and opportunity for his family. During the procedure, an Italian officer confiscated the respondent’s identification card from Morocco. Recalling the incident, the respondent stated:

***“We don’t know the rules”***

The respondent, and the group, did not have information about the legal asylum seeking procedures, and neither the translator or authorities gave them access to information before forcing them to sign the mentioned documents. All members of the group were given a document asking for personal information, including name and family name. The respondent was not allowed to keep the document nor was he given a copy. The documents were later given to Slovenian authorities when the group in transit was deported to Ljubljana (SLO). Prior to transportation the group was informed at the police station that they would be transported to “the center.” This respondent suggested this was a false claim, implying that the group were being told they would stay in Italy.

The group was transported in one Slovenian police van to a location in Ljubljana (SLO). The respondent described the location where the group was transported to as “the immigration

center.” Based on their experience, the respondents believe they were either brought to a Ljubljana police station or to the Ljubljana Vič Asylum Centre.

At the place of detention, Slovenian officers documented their fingerprints using the index and middle fingers. The group signed a document asking for their personal information. An officer told the respondent that they *“Are going to the judge.”* The respondent believes they were wrongfully informed regarding this process, and were given false information from a Slovenian police officer who told them they would appear before a judge (which they were never taken to). The transit group were detained overnight and slept at the facility in Ljubljana.

The group state they were collected from the facility by one Croatian police van with no windows. In the van they were exposed to extreme cold and felt nauseous from reckless driving and wide turns. They could not see and did not have their phones because the Croatian officers driving withheld their mobile devices, removing them and keeping them in the front of the van.

The group was forced to exit the van in a location which the respondents described as *“the jungle.”*, suggested to be a wooded area 5-10 kilometers from Velika Kladuša (BiH). When the group exited the van at the border, six male Croatian officers in black uniforms and ski masks were waiting outside of the van. The police took out the transit groups phones and broke all three using batons. The group’s three sleeping bags, three jackets, backpacks, and one tent were confiscated and burned in a fire lit by the officers..

After the removal and destruction of the items the officers physically attacked the transit group. Recalling the incident, the respondent described how the group was hit on the shoulders and back with police batons.

## *“They beat us in Croatia”*

One respondent was beaten with a police baton on the knee and stated: *“I have pain in my knee”*. The 42 year old man in the group was wearing prescription glasses which a Croatian officer confiscated and broke into pieces. After the beatings and damage to possessions, the three were ordered back into BiH (occurring on 24th November 2019).

**05/08/2019**

## **“AND THEY SAID, WE ARE JUST MIGRANTS, WE ARE NOT TOURISTS.”**

**Date and time:** August 5, 2019 07:00

**Location:** Ferneti, Italy

**Coordinates:** 45.69994500749603, 13.835266605321976

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 18 - 35 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of ten arrived in a small village near Ferneti, outside of Trieste, Italy (see map below) at 7:00 in the morning on August 5th. They had walked all the way to Italy from Bosnia over the course of many days. The respondent described that after entering into Italy, the group left their bags in the forest.

*"We left all of our belongings when we escaped in the forest, already on the way to Italy."*

The respondent described that shortly after this, they were approached by police officers.

*We entered [Italy] and everyone there was clapping their hands, celebrating. People gave us food, apples. They were nice and then they called the police. One of my friends saw someone on the phone and right after the police arrived.*

The group was close to a bus station during this exchange. After talking to the men some time, the police officers took the group to nearby facility.

*"We were close to a regular bus station, outside of the city center. The police arrived and they said on the phone that there is one minor. After that they took us to the camp."*

It is not entirely clear as to what "camp" the respondent and his group were taken to however it is likely that this camp was some sort of center nearby to Ferneti. The respondent described that at the camp, they interacted with a female translator from Morocco.

*Then [the] Moroccan woman came: "Do you want to seek asylum or not?" And we said: "No, we don't have any problem in our country, so there is no reason for us to seek asylum." If we want to seek asylum for political reason, we need a proof. Then the woman left. The police didn't do anything, they were not violent.*

During their time with the Italian authorities and social workers, the group misunderstood their legal options and the gravity of their situation.

*They told us that we are going to the camp. We went to the camp and the police stayed with us during the interview with the Moroccan woman. Then they gave us papers and then they drove us to the border. The police asked us, how we entered and they wanted to see the points at the map.*

The group signed several papers during their conversation with the Moroccan translator, however they did not understand what exactly it was that they signed.

*We asked the woman, what was on the paper because it was in Italian. She didn't translate and we didn't understand what we signed.*

The group-members also were made to give their fingerprints during this time and also had their pictures taken. After leaving this "camp", the group did not understand where they would be taken.

*"We didn't know where we were going and we had doubts. So we looked at the billboards and we understood that we were going to the border."*

*"They took us and drove us to [the] Slovenian border."*

When the group understood that they were being brought back, their interactions with the police officers who were transporting them became more tense. There were ten people in the group, however one minor stayed in Italy, meaning that only nine were returned back.

*"They started to push a bit. Until then we were good and there was someone translating. I told the translator that they have to find a solution. They can't just bring us back to Slovenia, knowing that we were in Italy. And they said, we are just migrants, we are not tourists."*

The group was then brought to a border station and handed over to Slovenian custody where they were kept in this station from 4:00 pm on August 5th until 2:00 am on August 6th. After this, the respondent described the group being brought to a "camp" at a different place in Slovenia where they were given food. It was not in Ljubljana. The group had their fingerprints and pictures taken at this station. The respondent described that in Slovenia, there was an Iraqi male translator present. He was described as being around 50 years old. Once again, in Slovenian they were asked to sign papers written in languages that they did not understand:

*Again we said to the translator: "We cannot understand, what's on the paper. Can you please tell us?" He didn't translate what was on the paper.*

In Slovenia, the group was allowed to keep the papers which they had signed in Slovenia and Italy. After being transported to the Slovenian-Croatian border, the group was handed over to Croatian custody.

At the police station in Croatia the group described having a conversation with a police officer who interviewed the group one at a time. The station they were held at was at the border.

*"It was like some kind of temporary set up with border police and local police. There were some small rooms we were entering. It was at the border."*

They did not have to sign any papers, give their fingerprints, and did not have their picture taken. During this time, the majority of the group-members had the papers which they had signed in Italy and Slovenian confiscated from them, however two group-members were able to hide and hold on to the papers which they had signed in Slovenia. The respondent recalled that at this station, he had a long conversation with a Croatian police officer who expressed regret and sympathy for the situation that the group was in. The officer communicated to the respondent that he did wish to make the journey of these men more difficult however he had orders from his boss to return the men to Bosnia which he could not ignore. This officer went out and bought the group-members food at some point during their stay in the station.

They stayed at this border station for around five hours.

*"We left the Croatian border at 7pm [on August 6th]. We arrived at the Bosnian border at 12."*

*"We stopped four times on the way but we couldn't tell where we were and they didn't open the car. We stayed inside the van."*

There were several other people in the van with the group on this ride to the Bosnian-Croatian border.

*"There were two other people with us, one from Pakistan and one from Algeria. They were going from one city to another by bus and they were stopped."*

After arriving to the Bosnian-Croatian border, the respondent described being shown a path into Bosnia by the officers present and told to go back. In total, there were five officers present at the push-back location, two of whom were in the transport van and three of whom were in a separate car. They all wore blue uniforms which were described to be a similar hue to the indigo-blue uniforms worn by local Bosnian police officers in Velika Kladusa.

*“One driving, one sitting in the front seat and three in the other car. The car we were in stopped and the two policemen waited for the other car with three policemen.”*

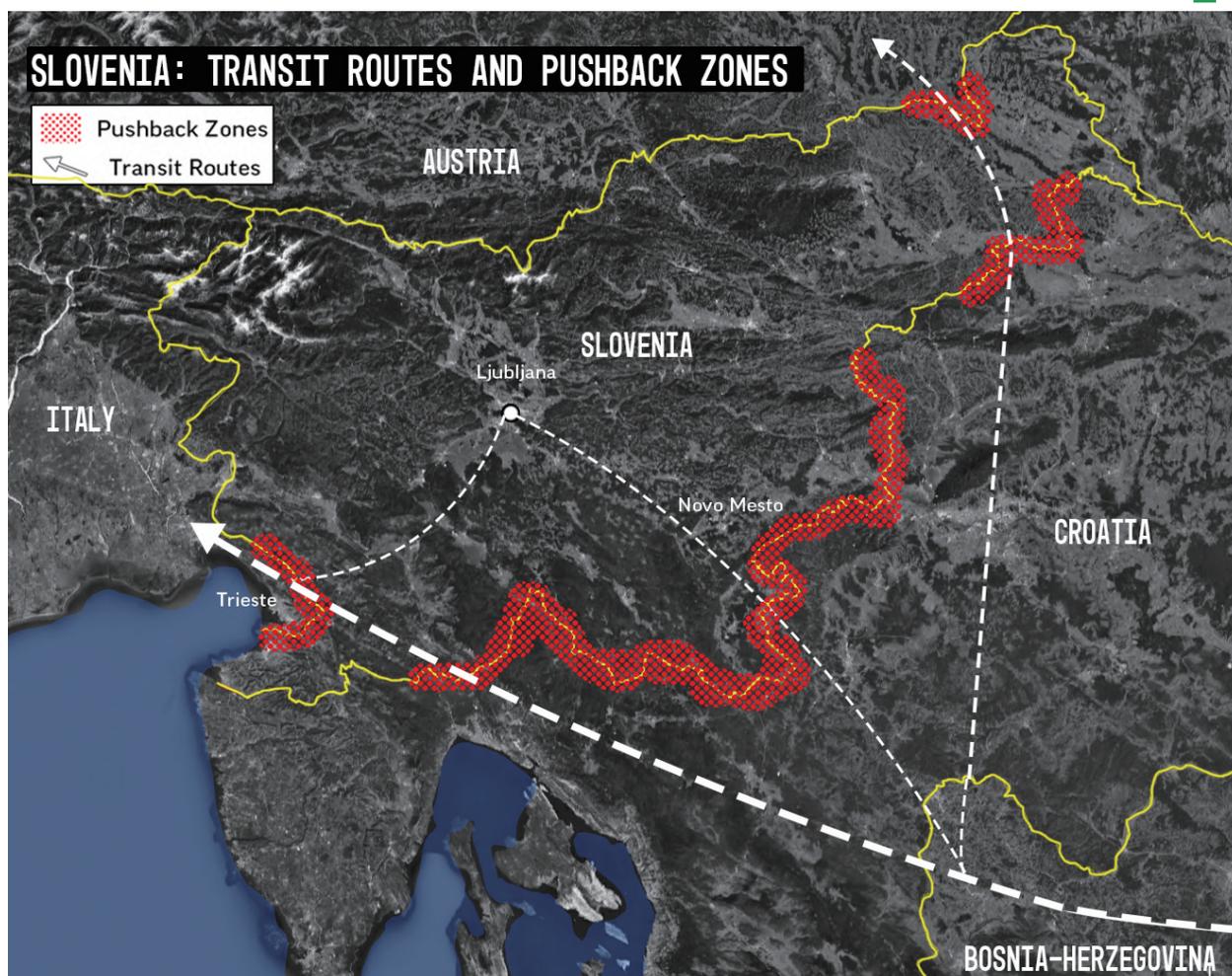
Their phones were broken at this time however the group did not experience any direct physical violence. Interestingly, the respondent mentioned that the officer with which he had become friends with in the border station previously was present at the push-back site, having driven back with the group, and was actually the officer who was in charge of breaking their phone. The respondent reiterated that he believed that this officer was a good man who only had to do bad things because of the orders of his superiors. The group was taken one at a time out of the van.

*They left us at the border. They stopped and they showed us the way by light, by torch. Then we just walked. They broke our phones before but they didn't beat us.*

The officers at the push-back location broke five mobile phones and six power banks of the group. They did not take any money from the group.

After being pushed back, the group walked approximately 20 kilometers back to Velika Kladusa. The respondent did not remember exactly where he was pushed back however he described it as a location northeast of Velika Kladusa.

# SLOVENIA



Slovenia is the first Schengen country on the Balkan route (after Greece), and one of the main transit points since the route shifted through Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) in 2018. Though the distance between Bosnia and Slovenia is only around 70 kilometers, the walk through Croatia usually takes 10 days or more. Yet these long and dangerous journeys invariably result in a forced return to Croatia within 24 hours.

Research and evidence collected by Amnesty International[1], the Ombudsman Office of the Republic of Slovenia[2] and BVMN member InfoKolpa[3] confirms that there is a systemic denial of access to asylum in Slovenia, carried out through malversation of procedures. In police stations asylum requests are ignored by the police, POM are faced with violence and threats or are misled into signing documents, thinking that they will be transferred to an asylum camp. Instead, they are subjected to an informal readmission procedure, leaving them without an option to appeal, or any other procedural safeguard against their removal.

This practice became systematic in early 2018, when official statistics indicated a sharp decrease in numbers of registered intentions to seek asylum and an increase in readmissions. A clear example of the above is the border police station Črnomelj, where the number of filed intentions to seek asylum dropped from 371 in May 2018 to only 13 in June 2018[4] despite an increase in recorded irregular border crossings. This decrease was the result of a series of internal police directives, at least one of which[5] was signed by Marko Gašperlin, current chairman of the management board of Frontex[6]. While to date, BVMN has collected 141 pushback testimonies from Slovenia detailing

the treatment of 1,181 persons, statistical reports on illegal migration collected from the Slovene Police indicate that from 2018 to 31st October 2020 there have been 24,756[7] people returned from Slovenia to Croatia via readmission.[8] Nearly all of them have been pushed back to BiH or Serbia in the manner of a chain-refoulement by Croatian police

The chain pushbacks from Italy and Austria to Slovenia are conducted in a similar way, through abrogated readmission procedures. By end of October 2020, there had been 1321 people readmitted from Italy to Slovenia[9], and there was also an increase of readmissions from Austria. The persons readmitted are returned to Croatia and subsequently on to BiH or Serbia. The issue of readmissions to Croatia was confirmed this year by a court in Genova, which stopped a Dublin deportation of a Pakistani citizen to Slovenia due to systemic deficiencies in the Slovenian asylum system and a high risk of further deportation to Croatia.[10]



This year InfoKolpa have observed a new practice emerge: detention of asylum seekers and fast-track asylum decision-making. Those detained were held in containers without access to direct sunlight, while being intimidated by police dogs.[11] This detention was ordered by the director of police Anton Travner who argued that people should be held in detention until the Ministry of Interior issues a negative asylum decision, so they could be returned to Croatia. Due to degrading treatment several protests broke out in the detention center in Postojna.[12] This change in policy bears resemblance to the “Hungarian model” of quick asylum requests processing under detainment.



Photo: Family found on a freight train in Dobova, at the Slovenian border, and later pushed back through Croatia to Serbia. Photo released by the Slovenian police. Case report by the BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-3-2020-0000-harmica-croatia/>



In Slovenia there have also even been attempts to legalise pushbacks. The proposed amendments of the Foreigners Act would, upon declaration of a “complex migration crisis” by the majority in parliament, allow for a suspension of the right to asylum[13]. By denying the right to asylum and conducting re-admissions to Croatia, Slovenia is violating the prohibitions on collective expulsion and torture. Despite overwhelming evidence, court decisions[14] and hundreds of testimonies, these violations are still officially denied, even though the Minister of Interior Aleš Hojs casually admitted in a newspaper interview that chain pushbacks are happening on a regular basis.[15]

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Photo: Fine + notice issued by Slovenian police, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/july-23-2019-2200-train-station-in-frankovci-slovenia/>

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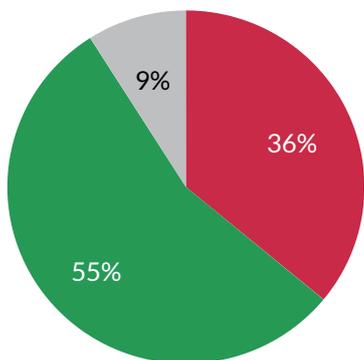
# STATISTICS

## Testimonies of pushbacks in Slovenia

Year	Number of testimonies	Affected persons
<b>Overall</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>1266</b>
2017	10	36
2018	39	343
2019	64	609
2020	25	278

### Pushbacks involving minors in Slovenia

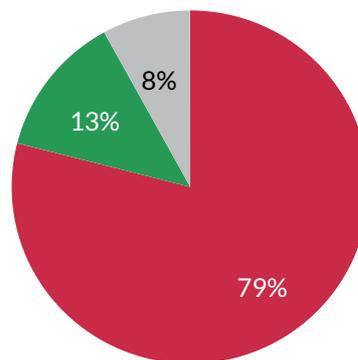
Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old



■ Yes (36%)
 ■ No (55%)
 ■ Unknown (9%)

### Intention to ask for asylum in Slovenia

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection.



■ Yes (79%)
 ■ No (13%)
 ■ Unknown (8%)

14/11/2020

## “HE WAS ASKED FOR HIS AGE AND WAS SLAPPED EVERY TIME HE GAVE THE ANSWER '16'”

**Date and time:** November 14, 2020 16:00

**Location:** Pljesevica mountain near Bihac, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 44.779803752061, 15.799899949219

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 15, 16 years old, partly unknown, from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, denial of appropriate sleeping equipment during night detention, withholding of sanitary facilities

**Police involved:** 4 officers (3 male, 1 female) in Slovenia, 4-5 officers in dark blue uniforms and green ski masks in Croatia, 4-5 officers in black clothes and black ski masks in Croatia

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of night equipment (bed, blanket etc.)

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a 16-year-old Afghani citizen. He is not accompanied by his parents, but his 18-year-old brother is with him. He started in Bosnia in a group of 8 Afghani citizens on November 12<sup>th</sup>. They crossed Croatia in a private car, which took around four hours. All members had to leave the car in close distance to the border between Croatia and Slovenia, in order to cross by foot. The respondent cannot give an exact location of crossing as he only saw forest and few houses.

On the Slovenian side of the border, the respondent found a car waiting for a 4-person group. A second car did not show up, so the group split. The driver told them to crawl on the floor of the car. After only 10 minutes of driving on Slovenian territory, the car was stopped by officers on a small road. By the time, it was around 5 or 6 o'clock in the afternoon and it was dark. The respondent could not see anything at first, as he was still down in the car. However, the officers stopped the car in the middle of the road, not on a parking lot, and told the driver to get out. From moans and screams, the respondent can say with certainty that the driver was beaten by the officers outside of the car.

Next, the respondent and the other group members were told to get out of the car. The respondent saw two white police vans with “Policija” label. He saw four officers (three male, one female). The officers checked the pockets of every person but did not find any valuables. The members were asked for their nationality and accused of being possibly infected by Covid 19. Following this, they had to get in one of the police vans and were driven for around five minutes. They could not see anything, as there was no window. They arrived at the police

station, but the respondent could not see the building from the outside, as the car went straight inside the building before an officer opened the door.

The respondent and the other three members were taken into a room. They were given documents and had to fill in their first names, family names, their nationality, and age. The document was in English language. The respondent wrote that he was 16 years old. When the officer saw this information, he slapped the respondent in the face and another time with the fist in his chest. Three times, the respondent was asked for his age and was slapped every time he gave the answer "16". By the third time, the respondent said "18" and he was let go. The age in the document was altered from 16 to 18. The officers took photos of each person, as well as their fingerprints. Every person had to give his backpack and his shoelaces, but they did not have to give any clothes or their mobile phones.

The group was given one blanket to spend the night. The room did not have any bed or sleeping place. It only contained one bench. The respondent was given macaroni to eat, and water. He states that going to the toilet was a "big problem". When he asked to go to the toilet, he was told to "wait" multiple times, and only much later he was allowed to go. They were taken out of the room not before 9 o'clock the next morning.

The next morning, the group was taken to another room where they stayed for another full day and a second night. The respondent could ask to go to the toilet and received three meals, in the morning, the afternoon and the evening respectively. He did not have the opportunity to wash himself.

On the following day, November 14, the group was given five documents each that the respondent calls "deport papers". They were in a foreign language, the respondent believes it to be Slovenian, and he could not understand the meaning of the text. He was told to sign the documents: "You need to sign", and the respondent did so. At around 8 o'clock in the morning, they were taken to the Croatian border by car. At this point, people from other groups joined them, so the group was made up of around 12 people altogether. It consisted of Afghani and Pakistani citizens, including two to three young women.

After a short ride, the group was let out of the van on an asphalt road. The respondent did not see any building or institution that might belong to a border control station. Four or five male Croatian officers that wore dark blue uniforms and green ski masks awaited them. The respondent had to give his name and the officers took a photo of each group member. After that, he was taken into a white van with "Policija" label. The respondent still had a watch at this point, and he states that the ride took seven to eight hours, with only few short breaks of around five minutes. The doors of the van were not opened during these breaks. The respondent describes a lack of oxygen in the car, no light, and he claims that people had to vomit. The people were not given any water or food, or the opportunity to go to the toilet.

When they were let out, four to five different officers awaited them, wearing black clothes and black ski masks. According to the respondent, this was at about 4:00 in the evening, it was almost dark. The respondent had to leave the car and one of the officers told each person to put their clothes on the ground. They were speaking English. Every group member had to leave their jackets, jumpers, telephones, and other belongings. The respondent did not see what happened to the belongings. Every person was hit with batons multiple times on the back and on the arms by the officers. Next, one officer fired a gun to the sky once and told everyone to "run, run, run". The group found itself on a small dirt road and walked in the direction of Bosnia.

They could not identify any border or border control, but after what felt like six hours, they arrived in Bihac between 9 and 10 o'clock at night.

22/10/2020

## “WHY YOU COME? WHY YOU COME?”

**Date and time:** October 22, 2020 00:00

**Location:** near Rodik 65, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.6237059, 13.978641

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 25 person(s), age: 16-25 , from: Pakistan, Bangladesh

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used, beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian officers in "army" attire, 6 Croatian police officers in dark uniforms and black ski masks, 2 police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

This documented case involves a chain push-back from Slovenia via Croatia to Bosnia-Herzegovina which took place on October 22, 2020 and affected a group of 25 men, 20 from Bangladesh and five Pakistanis. They all range in the age from sixteen to 25. The respondent estimated that there were about five to six minors within the group.

Before the apprehension in Slovenia, the transit group had already walked eight days, starting in Velika Kladusa, NW Bosnia. The respondent remembered seeing the road sign of the city “Rodik 65” and being about a day-walk away from the Italian city Trieste when they encountered three male Slovenian authorities described as “*army officers*”. The officers made the men stop and called a colleague who came to pick the men up with a big police van. He drove them to a nearby police station.

At the police station they spent one or two hours waiting in the hallway while each of them had to give their fingerprints. They were asked questions about their nationality, their age and their families. Afterwards they were all put into the big police van again and driven to an unknown police station in Croatia. At this station they just changed into another police van, this time operated by Croatian officers, and were driven to the Croatian-Bosnian border near Velika Kladusa.

The respondent described how the driver deliberately drove recklessly during the whole ride. The group, who had to squeeze themselves in the back of the van, experienced difficulties breathing, due to the lack of ventilation.

When the police van stopped at the Bosnian border, they had to leave the vehicle one by one and strip completely naked. The six police officers present took their money, phones and power banks and piled up their clothes and bags on the side, where they were set on fire afterwards. The men were then forced to lie down next to each other, the face turned onto the ground, *"like sleeping"*. The respondent described that first, one police officer stepped aggressively onto his head moving his feet back and forth, while pressing the respondent's face into the ground.

Afterwards the men were struck individually by several police officers. The officers used their hands, feet and batons, as well as big wooden branches that they took out of the woods. The naked men were primarily beaten onto their backs, arms and heads. The respondent estimated that they were hitting each person for at least five minutes, some even up to ten minutes.

While the officers were beating the respondent, they kept asking him, why he came to Croatia. *"Why you come? Why you come?"*. The interviewee describes that he felt like the police officers enjoyed hitting him: *"They make: 'ah, ah. Yeah, yeah!'"*. They continued doing this while the respondent pleaded for them to stop.

*"Help, help mama, help! Please, please! Please help me. Don't hit. Don't hit me."*

After they finished the procedure, the men could put back on their T-shirt and their underwear. They then had to line up in file, each grabbing the shoulders of the person standing in front. In this formation they were forced to cross the border with the police officers flanking them, repeatedly striking the men onto their torsos and legs.

*"I am already one year and eight months in Bosnia. I go to so many games. But now it is different. I see so many people coming back with big problems. [...] Two weeks ago, so many people come back with so dangerous health. Very dangerous. Before I never see the situation like this."*

The indicated location refers to the initial apprehension, not to the pushback itself.

**28/09/2020**

## **"THEY MADE US NAKED IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY"**

**Date and time:** September 28, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Novo Mesto, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.818892387032, 15.170903325139

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** First 3, then 5 person(s), age: 16-37 , from: Afghanistan, Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 slovenian police officers wearing light blue uniform, 1 civil slovenian police officer, 4 croatian police officers wearing black clothes

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent group for this testimony had left in from Sid, Serbia in the last week of September via a truck which had made its way into Slovenia, at which point they had left the vehicle and attempted to continue their journey on foot. The group of 3 men later described being stopped by local people and later on police in the northern outskirts of the Slovenian city of Novo Mesto. There were local people there who were insulting them and after the police arrived. There was 1 police cars with 2 police officers wearing light blue police uniforms. After 5 minutes a black civil car was described as arriving to the scene with 1 civil police officer wearing civil clothes as well as 2 additional police officers.

***“I was feeling very bad, because I was in the truck for 2 days and all my water was finished.”***

Upon their apprehension, the police officers were described as asking them a lot of questions: how did you arrive, from which way did you arrive, which road did you arrive on and so on. There was a minor in the group of people-on-the-move and he spoke some English. The police officers told him to come to them and after which point the officers were described as being physically violent with the group. The respondent described that he almost fell unconscious and he was crying. The officers reportedly asked the respondent again about how he arrived to Slovenia and he answered that they had arrived by vehicle. Allegedly, the officers told him he was lying and were physically violent with him again.

After around an hour, a police van arrived with 2 additional police officers inside. The police van took drove the group to the police station at Obrežje border crossing. They were in the van for around 40 minutes. They put them in a very small room, where there was already one person-on-the-move. The people-on-the-move did not receive water or food, even though they asked for it. Just one of the police officers was wearing a medical mask. The toilet was inside the room and the smell was very bad. The police officers took all of their clothes, even underwear.

***“They made us naked in front of everybody.”***

The Slovenian police officers took their Serbian camp cards and did not return them. They also took people-on-the-move’s phones and wrote names on them. They returned them after some time. The police took the people-on-the-move’s fingerprints. The respondent asked them if they will give him stay. The police officer said no, because you don’t want to stay here, you want to go to Italy.

***“The place wasn’t for humans. This jungle is better than that place.”***

They spend the night in that room, and during that another person was brought to the room, so they were a group of 5 people. The next morning they were transferred to Croatia. According to the respondent, a police van took them from the room to the Serbian border. According to the respondent, it was the same van the whole way.

The van reportedly stopped in Zagreb to take 8 more people-on-the-move. They were driving for around 4 hours. Finally, the van arrived to the push back location – on the fields near Batrovci border crossing. The respondent saw there were 2 Croatian police officers in the van wearing black clothes. In addition, at the location there was a police car waiting with 2 Croatian police officers. The Croatian police officers took phones from 3 people and money from everybody who had euros. They did not take the Serbian dinars from the group. The respondent had a prescription paper from doctor for medicine and they took it from him. He told them he cannot receive the medicine he needs without it, but they still took it and did not return it to him.

**23/09/2020**

**““WE WILL NOT HIT YOU ANYMORE IF YOU GO NOW.””**

**Date and time:** September 23, 2020 02:00

**Location:** Lipovac, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 44.995311967432, 19.089867654355

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 18,21 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian officers, 2 in light blue uniform (1 being a women), 1 in civil clothes, 6 Croatian police officers, 4 in light blue uniform of border police, 2 in dark uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondents were first apprehended by Slovenian authorities approximately 15 km inside Slovenia, South of Ptuj in a village called Podlehnik around 2:00 am on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September. The police officers arrived to the scene with one civil car and a white van without police insignia written on it. There was one officer in civilian clothes and one in a light blue uniform. After some time, they transported the two people-on-the-move to the police station in Podlehnik (Slovenia) [46.336616, 15.878350].

One of the people-on-the-move said he asked, "Are we going to be deported?" and the answer he got was no.

**"I was very happy, they said no, we will not deport you"**

At the police station was a policewoman. During their stay at the police station they were asked many detailed questions about their journey from Afghanistan to Slovenia. Why they left Afghanistan, how much money they spend, which countries they travelled through and so on. The police took their pictures, fingerprints and asked for their family`s names. After that they asked the people-on-the-move to sign many papers. The whole time a translator was not present, but they were communicating in English. The respondents were kept at the police station for one day and one night and were provided with food and water.

Besides being led to believe they would be able to claim asylum in Slovenia the following morning they were driven in a white van to the Croatian borde and handed over to Croatian authorities.

In Croatia they were taken by two officers in light blue uniform and with a car to a police station in Zagreb. The officers were wearing light blue uniforms of the border police but after 15 minutes at the station, new officers came. These officers were wearing dark uniforms and checked their phone, fingerprints, pictures, and personal information again. At the Zagreb police station, the respondents did not receive any food or water. Not even a glass of water despite them asking for it.

After approximately two hours the two were taken in one van directly to the Serbian border. During the ride, one respondent asked to go to the toilet, but the police did not stop.

They arrived at the Serbian border, in a remote area close to and south of the A3 highway border crossing at Lipovac, at around 10:00 pm. There were two more officers already waiting for them, wearing blue uniforms. The respondent said that the officers in the blue uniform were acting worse towards them, than the ones in the black uniforms who came with them from Zagreb. At the push back location the Croatian police took everything, clothes and money, bags and phones and burned their belongings. They hit them with batons, while it was raining and the respondents were freezing. In the end they took their shoes and told them "we will not hit you anymore if you go now."

**16/09/2020**

**"A LOCAL PERSON GAVE THEM FOOD, THEN CALLED THE POLICE"**

**Date and time:** September 16, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Koper, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.555405187971, 13.728726421875

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 18 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 10 Croatian officers dressed in black with ski masks, 3 Slovenian officers in blue

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 16th of September an 18-year-old man from Afghanistan was pushed back from a location near the Italian border in Slovenia, back to Bosnia. He had originally started on this attempt from Bosnia with a group of approximately 65 people, all male with aged between 17 and 40 years old. They had walked for 17 days by which time the respondent and two of his friends had been separated from the larger group. They had ended up in a port city (presumed to be Koper, Slovenia) and had not eaten for three days. In Koper, they asked a local person for help who took them to his home and gave them food.

While they were eating, the local person called the police. Three officers who wore the standard blue uniforms of the Slovenian police arrived at the house and took the respondent and his two friends to a police station where they were kept for around 8 hours. They were given documents to read and sign, written in Slovenian and English. No translation was provided in the respondent's own language, and no translator was offered. Fingerprints of each group-member were also taken in the station.

After some time, the group-members were loaded into a 'white combi' van with no windows – like a prison van – and transported back to the Croatian border. There were 5 people in this van in total (two other men from an unaffiliated transit group were also in the van with them). The respondent described that it was very hot in the van during this time. Once they arrived to the Croatian border, they were transferred into the custody of Croatian authorities. The men were quickly loaded into another van on the Croatian side of the border and then driven back to the Croatian border with Bosnia.

When they arrived at the Bosnian border, the respondents described seeing what he believed were Croatian authorities who were dressed all in black with ski masks. There were 10 officers in total who allegedly called each person to come forward one by one. They beat each individual with a baton and also kicked them. The respondent showed the places on his body where he had been hit – his arm, his ribs and his leg. The officers took phones and money from everyone – 200 euros and 2 or 3 phones and then burnt the bags, clothes and shoes. "They took the shoes and even the socks!" They were then told to walk back to Bosnia. It took them 8 hours to arrive to Velika Kladuša.

***"My mother, my family say money is finished. They are so unhappy. I am so unhappy".***

08/09/2020

## “JUST HAPPY THE POLICE DIDN'T KILL ME”

**Date and time:** September 8, 2020 22:00

**Location:** near Velika Kladusa, Bosnia & Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.164186189168, 15.807890036938

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 28-35 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 7 Slovenian regular police, unspecified amount of Slovenian police at the police station, 3 Slovenian police dogs, 5 Croatian regular police, unspecified amount of Croatian police at police station, 6 Croatian police in black masks and black uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** No Name KIchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On September 8, 2020, four men aged between 28 and 35 years – three from Algeria and one from Morocco – were walking through the forest in a mountainous area three and a half kilometers away from the Slovenian-Austrian border. They could not give a more precise location, but thought that they were on the eastern side of Slovenia as opposed to the side bordering Italy. At around 3:00 pm in the afternoon, they were apprehended by seven Slovenian officers with three police dogs. As they had been walking in the forest, they did not know how the Slovenian police had discovered them.

When the Slovenian police spotted them walking, they yelled “Stop! Sit down with your hands up! If you do not stop, we will shoot!” The men complied with the order and sat down with their hands up. After approaching the men, the police asked for their names, ages and countries of origin. The respondent, a 33-year-old man from Algeria, said that when one member of the group reported his country of origin as Morocco, one Slovenian officer said “Fuck Morocco and all Moroccans”. The Slovenian officers also kicked them at some point while they were seated.

The group was then searched for weapons, and the Slovenian police also took their phones, power banks, and sleeping bags. They all proceeded to walk about twenty minutes to the main road, where they were then loaded into a Slovenian police van and driven to a police station about thirty-five minutes away.

When they arrived at the station, the respondent acted as a main interlocutor between the police and the rest of the group due to his ability to speak English more proficiently. When he asked for asylum in Slovenia the police said “No asylum for you, you must go back to your own country”. The police then demanded that they sign several documents. The respondent

believed that one document was an acknowledgement of their deportation to Croatia and the other demanding a fee for illegally crossing the border. When the respondent stated that he did not want to sign the documents, and that the police should sign them instead, the officer said "Fuck you, you must make signature". He then took the primary respondent into a separate room and proceeded to beat him with a baton until he finally relented and signed the documents. However, the respondent said that he did not end up paying a fee in the end. The Slovenian officers gave them a carton of sardines and some chocolate during their detainment at the station.

They were then loaded into another van and driven about one hour to the border of Slovenia and Croatia, where they were handed over to three Croatian officers. The Slovenian authorities also handed over the group's phones and power banks to the Croatian authorities. When they arrived at the Croatian police station nearby, one Croatian officer showed the group the bag that held their phones and said to them "**Say bye bye forever to your phones**"; the respondent did not know what ended up happening to their phones. They were then held in a room for about an hour before they were photographed, fingerprinted, and asked for their names and countries of origin. Though the group asked several times if they could use the toilet, they were denied use each time.

At around six o'clock in the evening, they were driven by 2 Croatian police officers in blue uniforms to the Bosnian-Croatian border in a van with no windows. The men both wore masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 so the respondent could not describe what their faces looked like, but said that one was bald and the other had dark hair. The journey took about four hours, and the police would often drive very quickly and then suddenly and violently brake.

When they arrived at the Bosnian border several kilometers outside of Velika Kladuša, the Croatian police did not immediately let them out of the van, but stayed in the front of the van talking for about twenty minutes. Though he could not hear what they were saying, the respondent guessed that they were planning what they would do to them before the group returned to the Bosnian side. They then took out the members of the group one by one from the van.

When it was the turn of the primary respondent and he emerged from the van, he discovered that six more police officers with black masks and black uniforms were waiting outside. They made him undress to his underwear, then burned his clothes and shoes in a fire in front of him. After, they forced him to lay facedown and told him "Do not speak, be quiet". They beat him with a baton for what the respondent said felt like twenty minutes. When he tried to protect his head with his arm, the police beat his arm with additional fervor, resulting in a break. At some point, the respondent said to the police "Please stop, I am not a terrorist, I am only trying to cross the border, please from your humanity stop!". One police officer responded "We are not human, we have no humanity".

After they finished beating him, they screamed at him "Go to Bosnia!". He did not immediately see his friends, however the group reunited and stayed near the border for about thirty minutes, after which they all split up. Because of his broken arm, the respondent was able to get medical treatment at Miral camp. He stated that he was "just happy the police didn't kill me".

01/09/2020

## “WE DIDN'T RUN SO THEY DIDN'T BEAT US”

**Date and time:** September 1, 2020 10:00

**Location:** Slovenia interior (30km from Croatian border)

**Coordinates:** 45.942790375786, 15.056838190114

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 24-35 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 5 or 6 Slovenian policemen

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The 27 year old respondent interviewed in this case was pushed back from Slovenia to Bosnia, via Croatia. He was part of a 8 person group of men from Morocco, aged between 24 and 35.

The group was in Slovenia, about 30km away from the Croatian border (see map below). The transit group were apprehended at around midnight on 31st August 2020 by 5 or 6 Slovenian police wearing green and black clothes and head coverings so only their eyes were visible. The officers had guns and showed them to the group; the respondent inferred that this was to intimidate them. The respondent said they were not assaulted by the capturing officers:

*“We didn’t run, so they didn’t beat us”*

The transit group were brought to a police station in Slovenia where they were detained for about 4 hours. Then the group of men were brought from Slovenia to Croatia by van, arriving at about 04:00 on 1st September 2020. At the border, the Croatian police took their belongings. The Croatian police burnt their bags and put their phones and power banks in a plastic bag and did not return them. The group spent the rest of the night in the police station. They were placed in a room shared with other people who had been caught that day. There were 6 or 7 other people in the room, and the respondent believes they were either Pakistani or Afghani. In describing the room, the respondent stated:

*“there was just a room with a metal door, nothing inside. Water, nothing. If you want to go to the toilet, you have to do it there.”*

The next morning, they were brought back to the Bosnian border. The respondent does not know the exact location of the pushback, but stated it was close to Bihac (BiH). The group were

removed across the border by Croatian police at approximately 10:00. Referring to the aftermath of the pushback the respondent stated:

*“Then you start from the beginning again. No telephone, no belongings. No way to talk to family. It is very hard.”*

**24/08/2020**

## **“HE BEGGED NOT TO BE DEPORTED BECAUSE OF CROATIAN POLICE'S VIOLENCE”**

**Date and time:** August 24, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Ilirska Bistrica, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.570099, 14.2418616

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: Reporter: 19; others 20s , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenian municipal officers; Slovenian border officers (no details available), Croatian border officers (no details available)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On August 24, a group of eight young men were pushed back from Slovenia to Bosnia via Croatia. The primary respondent for this report was 19 years old; he and his group were from Pakistan. The others were older than him, but all in their early twenties.

After making their way through Croatia into Slovenia in the preceding week, the group was making its way through the forest areas surrounding the town of Ilirska Bistrica in Slovenia, at which point they waived to a police car. There was a woman officer and the respondent immediately asked for asylum when she stopped. He said, “I want asylum, here I don’t want to go back” and told the story of his journey from Pakistan to Slovenia.

The officer who stopped called for further backup. After some time, two other (male) officers arrived on the scene who eventually transported the group to the police station in Ilirska Bistrica. The respondent begged not to be deported because of the violence of the Croatian police and then to be deported to Serbia and not Bosnia if they were going to deport him.

When asked how the police responded to his plea for asylum, the respondent said they gave him six papers to sign (he did not understand the content). They kept three papers and gave

him three; Croatian authorities later took these papers from him as well as his phone, so he had no record of them.

After some time in the station, the Slovenian authorities drove the group back to the border with Croatia. The respondent describes them as having “good behavior,” i.e., not hurting the group. They were then transferred to the custody of Croatian officers wearing balaclavas.

Shortly after this, the Croatian officers drove them back to the Bosnian border. There they took their mobiles, their money and their clothes. The young man described having his pants, his underwear, his shoelaces taken and his shirt ripped. He was made to walk back to Croatia without clothes.

He said the police did the same to his friends – took their money, mobiles and possessions; stripped them. And also hit him and the others. They begged to pay to be deported to Serbia, but the Croatian officers made them walk back to Bosnia.

***“They think we are animals, but we want a good life. We are humans, not animals,” he said.***

**04/08/2020**

## **“I WAIT FOR A LAWYER WHO CAN HELP ME FOR JUSTICE, BUT NO ONE [IS READY TO HELP]”**

**Date and time:** August 4, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Staro Selo Topusko, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.21573, 15.924467

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 25,27,28,33 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), water immersion, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian male police officers with official uniforms, 1 police van; unspecified number of Croatian police officers, 1 police van; 3 Croatian male police officers with official uniforms; 3 male Croatian police officers, 1 police van; 8 officers wearing ski mask, with batons and tasers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondents in this case, a group of four men aged 25, 27, 28, 33 from Algeria, were pushed back to Croatia from the Vič **asylum processing center** in Ljubljana, Slovenia on the 3rd of August 2020, around 1:00 pm in the afternoon. According to the respondent's testimony, a

large, unspecified number of other people having different origins (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco...) suffered the same destiny that day.

***“There is no specific reason for deport”, says the respondent, “some people stay, some people are back”.***

The group of respondents had reached the Ljubljana camp the day before, on the 2nd of August 2020, after a 13-day-long trip in the woods from Bosnia Herzegovina. As the respondent recalled, once in the camp, the group on the move spent the night in a cell and, in the morning, it was informed that their asylum request had been rejected and that the whole group would have been deported back to Croatia. “*Deport*”, says the respondent, referring to the announcement made by the police in the morning of the 3rd of August 2020. According to the respondent, the group was told that

***“at the moment, Maghrebi have no right to ask for asylum”.***

Accordingly, around 1:00 pm, three Slovenian male police officers wearing official uniforms loaded the group of four respondents in a police van and drove them to the border to Croatia. The respondent did not know where they were heading to and is unable to recall how long the travel in the van lasted. Once they reached the Croatian border, the respondents were handed over to an unspecified number of Croatian police officers who, at the border police station, withheld their phones and powerbanks, money, backpacks and sleeping bags. Then, the officers drove the respondents to a nearby police station using a police van.

At the police station, the respondents interacted with three male police officers wearing official uniforms, one of whom “*was looking at them*”, while the other two were carrying out all the administrative procedures. The respondents had their fingerprints taken and were asked for personal information such as name, surname, age, country of origin, father’s and mother’s name, which [migration] route they came from, how much money they had with them et cetera. In addition, the respondents were shown some pictures portraying other “*refugees*” [people on the move] and were asked if they knew them. As the respondent refers, he recognized some faces but he did not tell anything to the police, fearing that they could beat him if he had refused to answer further questions on those people’s account. The respondents were also given some documents in French and Arabic, which they did not have time to properly read, and were forced to sign them.

***“If you do not sign up, they beat you at the border”, says the respondent.***

At the police station there was a translator, whom the respondent describes as “*racist*”, who made them answer “*stupid questions*”. As the respondent says, the translator asked the group “*what do you do here*” and told them to “*go back to your country*”. The respondents asked for asylum but the officers told them that “*that’s not possible*”. Since he hadn’t had food since the day before, the respondent asked the officers if they could give him and his friends food. One officer asked him for money and the respondent gave him some 20 euros he had saved, with which the officer bought some food and cigarettes. According to the respondent, the officer cheated on the real price and withheld the change.

The group remained at the police station until 8:00 pm that evening, according to the respondent’s perception. Afterwards, the group was loaded in a police van which had no windows, so that the respondent could not see outside. The three male police officers who

were driving the van gave them no explanation on what was happening and the respondents did not know where they were travelling to. The respondent reports the officers to drive recklessly.

Once they reached the border to Bosnia Herzegovina (approximate coordinates 45.215730, 15.924467, HR), late at night, the group stepped out of the van one by one, under the pouring rain. At both the right and left side of the back of the van, there were four officers with ski masks, for a total of eight, who beat the group up using the tasers and the batons. The group were hit on their head and face and one member of the group lost some teeth due to the beating.

***“We had fear”, says the respondent, “you see your friends beaten up and you hear them screaming... I wait for a lawyer who can help me for justice, but no one [is ready to help]”.***

The respondent started to run in the dark to escape from the officers, in the opposite direction of them, that is in the direction to Bosnia Herzegovina, crossing a river by foot without seeing anything and ignoring where he was going. While escaping, he turned around calling for his friend and the officers answered back “yes yes”, but the respondent understood that it was the police and did not head back for him. Instead, he continued screaming his name and calling him until his friend reached him.

***“I kept on calling my friend, I called his name “M., M.!", I could hear him screaming. They [the police] surrounded him and beat him up so much that he cannot move anymore. It's horrible, there's no humanity, if only you could see how they treated us, as animals...”,*** says the respondent referring to the experience and treatment he suffered at the hands of the police.

The group of respondents reached the city of Velika Kladusa, BiH, on the 4th of August 2020, after walking in the woods for many kilometers. The respondent refers to have suffered a similar push back from Croatia to Bosnia Herzegovina in February: also in that case, he was forced to cross a river, regardless of the cold weather and the snow.

**01/08/2020**

**““WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING, IF WE WILL DIE OR WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US””**

**Date and time:** August 1, 2020 19:00

**Location:** Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 46.03174541578, 14.472285675678

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 40 - 50 person(s), age: 12 - 30 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, gunshots, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, burning of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenia: 4 civil police, 1 car, 5 or 6 police officers in black uniforms, 20-25 officers at police station. Croatia: 2 police cars, 2 van, at least 8 police officers, dog with muzzle. BiH: 1 police car, wearing black uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The chain pushback which this testimony concerns happened nearly a month before the testimony was collected.

The primary respondent for this report described being part of a group of around 45 people-on-the-move. In the group, approximate ten of the group-members were from from Pakistan and the others were from Afghanistan. The respondent specified that there was at least one 12-year-old boy, but there were another approximately 20 minors. After a number of days crossing from Bosnia through the Croatia, they entered into Slovenian territory and made their way to the capital city of Ljubljana. They were then picked up by Slovenian authorities in Ljubljana, on a wide street, close to a small park.

***“There were a lot of minors, but they still didn’t give them stay. They speak: This camp full.”***

The respondent described that were apprehended by four civilian police officers. They called for back-up and after around 15 minutes, five or six officers in black uniforms arrived to the scene. This happened at around 7:00 in the evening on August 1st. The officers in black uniforms then brought the group to a police station which they arrived to around 8:00 pm or 9:00 pm.

The police officers put somewhere between 15 to 20 of the group-members in one room, with a speaker and a camera inside to communicate. After three hours of waiting, around midnight, they received dry bread and a bottle of water. When asking for more food in the morning the answer was: “No food, go back.”

At the police station there was a Panjab translator, who spoke to the group in Pashto and Punjabi. The respondent described that during this initial procedure, his personal data was taken, such as his mother’s and his father’s names and his pictures and fingerprints. He told the translator that he was 17 but when he later got a paper from the police it said 22 years old on it.

The group-members allegedly spent two nights and a full day in the police station, for a total of approximately 30 hours. After this, in the morning, the group was brought by Slovenian authorities to the Croatian border and transferred to Croatian custody. On the Croatian site they were awaited with 2 police vehicles and 2 vans. Apparently, the Croatian police had a dog with a muzzle, that they did not use.

The people-on-the-move were loaded into these vehicles [around 20 to 25 persons in each van] and began a long journey to the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina. This process was described

as taking an unusually long time – between 5 and 8 hours. The pushback took place on a dirt road, one side was forested and there was one house that the respondent could see. At the border the Croatian police officers stole their phones, powerbanks and money and made them undress to their underwear. They burned their clothes and shoes. The police hit the respondent and his friends with their hand, batons and kicking them. When the Croatian police told him to go towards the border he was shoved from behind and fell to the ground.

***The respondent said: “We didn’t understand what is happening, if we will die or what will happen to us”. They were afraid for their life’s.***

After walking one hour into BiH territory, the BiH police came and fired their guns into the air. They arrived with one car and were wearing black uniforms. They beat the people-on-the-move again and told them to go to camp. It took the group almost two days, without easy access to food or water, to arrive to the Bosnian city of Bihać.

**03/03/2020**

## **““WE SPENT ALL THE NIGHT IN THAT ROOM WITHOUT SLEEPING, WE COULDN'T BREATHE ...””**

**Date and time:** March 3, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Harmica, Croazia

**Coordinates:** 45.89193400000001, 15.6849318

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 32 person(s), age: 3-60 , from: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 15 Croatian border officers, 3 police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the evening of March 2nd, a group of 32 people (including a pregnant woman and 12 children) from different countries (Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, Syria, Palestine, Afghanistan), entered into the cargo of a freight train. Their intention was to travel with the train closer into the European Union.

The group entered the train at around 10:00 pm on the 2nd, and divided themselves into sub-groups of around five or six people in each train-car.

In the train-car where the respondent was hidden, there were five people (including his daughter of 5 years old, his wife and another minor of 12 years old) while in the wagon of his

friend there were six people (including two minors of 15 and 10 years old respectively, as well as an adult woman).

The respondent and his family remained hidden in the train-car under a pile of clay for around five hours, waiting for the train to leave. At around 3:00 am, the train began to move towards the Croatian city of Tovarnik. At the Croatian border, some police officers boarded the train in search of hidden people but could not find them.

The train later arrived in Dobova (SLO) at sometime between 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm and stopped. The groups remained hidden during this time.

At 9:30 pm, special police (described as wearing dark blue uniforms, yellow vests and yellow helmets) climbed atop of the train car with two dogs. At that time, they found the respondent and the rest of his group in the same wagon. The officers told them to get off of the train and to wait near a wall in front of the train. They obeyed without resistance and waited on the wall for a while.

*"We were controlled on sight by a soldier and around 10 policemen. They searched us and searched our entire luggage like we were criminals".*

*"Several times I tried to ask to the police officers if I could go to the toilet and smoke a cigarette but their answer was always the same: "NO, shut up".*

After the search, the group of people (the respondent and the other 4 people with him) was transferred to a nearby police station where their personal information (name, date of birth and country of origin) was collected, and their fingerprints and photographs were taken.

*"I wanted to point out to them that they didn't have the right to take a picture of my daughter; she is only 5 years! However, when I was to speak, they shut me up immediately in an arrogant way. So I kept quiet for fear that they would beat me up"*

*"There were a lot of cops, military and dogs outside. We were afraid. We couldn't refuse to give them our fingerprints".*

After this, the police officers took the group to another closed room next to the office where they were fingerprinted. The respondent claimed that they were in that room for around an hour. During this time, police officers kept going in and out of the room (three or four times), asking them questions, such as: "How many people were there inside the train? How did they get on the train? Who did they pay to go inside?"

On the fourth time, a police officer came inside the room, shouting, "Come out!". The group was then ushered into a van by the Slovenian authorities. After around twenty minutes driving, the Slovenian authorities took the group to the border and delivered it back to the Croatian police, in another police station (exactly in Perkovčev ul. odv. 1, Harmica, Croatia).

Once there, they were divided by gender: the children and women were first brought out of the van and the men were brought second. The Croatian authorities took the group to another office where they were searched for another time: the police asked for their belongings: bags, mobile phones and power banks. The group was then taken to another room where they were locked together with the 30 people that had been in the train with them originally, in other wagons.

The group and all the people were forced to leave their luggage outside the room without the possibility to take the food and the clothes they brought with them for the long travel. The room was completely empty, there were only a table and a few chairs.

All the people were forced to sleep on the floor in this empty room, with no mattresses or cots to lie on. At sometime between 1:00 am and 2:00 a.m. a policewoman entered the room and shouted "Go sleep, No toilet". She turned off the light and locked the door. From that moment forward, no one could leave the room.

At some point, during the night, a child did not feel well but when his mother asked the police officers outside if she could go out to the bathroom, she did not receive an answer.

At this point the respondent approached the window and, with one arm, tried to attract the attention of a policeman saying that a child was not feeling well and needed to go to the bathroom. It was only at this point that a police officer arrived and opened the door to let the mother out with her child. At this moment the respondent asked again if he could take his bag to get some water and some food but the answer of the police was:

*"No, you can't take anything, you have to leave everything here, don't touch nothing and go inside "*

The respondent obeyed the orders without objecting and accordingly for all the night they did not have access to food and water.

*"We spent all the night in that room without sleeping, we couldn't breathe because of the large amount of people who were there and we were all lying on the floor."*

The next morning the police entered the room and told the people inside to get ready and leave quickly in order to bring the big group back to Serbia. Then, they brought some bread to the big group and a small box of fresh cream for breakfast.

First the police took the children and women out of the room and then the men. They divided all the people in groups and they ushered them in 3 vans. The respondent was in the last van with other 10 people, all men.

*"The van left very quickly and the whole trip seemed to be on a boat in a stormy sea. There was nothing to hold on to, and at every turn I felt like I was going to fall"*

According to the respondent, the police were having fun braking abruptly and running fast with the vans all the way without ever stopping.

*"My daughter felt not well along the way and she threw up ."*

At 3:30 p.m. on March 3rd, the respondent and the other people arrived at the border with Serbia where they were released from the officers. Their bags and phones were returned but the respondent did not receive his power bank back. The respondent and the group then took their luggage and walked back to Sid, following the rails.

The incident was covered by several media outlets in Slovenia and outside of the region, mainly due to a picture that was taken while the group was being pulled out of the train initially:

<https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/23225/slovenie-la-police-decouvre-trente-migrants-caches-sous-de-l-argile-dans-un-train-de-marchandises>

16/02/2020

## “I TOLD THEM GIVE US A CHANCE, THEY DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING”

**Date and time:** February 16, 2020 01:30

**Location:** Veliki Obljaj

**Coordinates:** 45.21795557216758, 16.003518616673368

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 22+ , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 6/7 Slovenian police officers, 1 Slovenian police car, unknown number of Croatian police officers, 2 Croatian police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, an Afghani male aged 22, was travelling with a transit group of 25 people in the Croatian interior. He separated from the group with one other person (Afghan male 18+), and on Saturday 15th February 2020 attempted to cross the border with Slovenia via train heading to Ljubljana. Shortly into Slovenian territory the carriages were stopped in a small station, this occurred at approximately 13:00/14:00. The train was boarded by the Slovenian police who began asking for passports and documents from the passengers.

The respondent stated that there were six/seven officers present. When the officers came to their seats the officers asked:

“Do you have documents?”

The respondent and his companion replied:

“No we don't”

The police officers removed the two transit persons from the train and walked them a short distance to a “container” by the side of the tracks. The respondent addressed the officers directly asking for the opportunity to lodge a claim for asylum.

### **“I told them give us a chance, they didn’t say anything”**

The police ignored the request and first made a pat down search of the men and confiscated their phones. Then the officers made the two men fill in forms with their names and sign them. The officers also took the men’s pictures. The whole process was completed very quickly according to the respondent, and the two men were then loaded into a Slovenian police vehicle and driven for approximately 20 minutes.

They were unloaded at a small border crossing with Croatia. The Slovenian police handed the pair in transit over to the Croatian authorities, and gave the men’s telephones to the officers. The respondent recalls seeing many officers present at the border crossing in “*police uniform*”, and was unable to describe the full number. The respondent states that the Croatian police did not carry out any processing themselves but led the men into a container where they were detained until around 21:00/22:00.

The pair were loaded in the dark into a Croatian police van. Inside the rear part of the van was one other detained person that the respondent described “*Arabic*”. The three detainees were driven away from the border station. Someway through the journey to the border the van stopped and they were removed from the back and put into another van containing seven detained Pakistani males. The “*Arabic*” man was told to remain inside the first van. After this exchange, the respondent was transported on towards the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The van arrived at the border in an area east of Velika Kladusa in the early hours of the morning on Sunday 16th February 2020 at approximately 01:30. The transit group, now nine in total including the merged Pakistani group, were taken out of the van. Three officers were present, and were new officials who had come in the vehicle they’d been transferred into. The respondent received his phone back from the officers, then the transit group were ordered back into BiH.

The respondent walking for sometime, until finding the village of Vrnograc (BiH) and signposting that directed them to the Velika Kladusa where they could get a bus back to Bihac.

**03/02/2020**

### **“THEY BURNED ALL. I ADDED ALL MY LIFE WITH ME, I DIDN'T KNOW”**

**Date and time:** February 3, 2020 09:00

**Location:** South of Crni Potok (HR)

**Coordinates:** 45.2197222, 15.8657222

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 16, 17, 26, 44 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 4 Slovenian police officers (armed with a gun), 1 official van ; 2 Croatian regular police officers ; unknown number of officers present at the police station ; 9 officers matching Croatian Intervention police and Regular police uniform descriptions ; 2 official vans ; 1 official car ;

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of four respondents, three from Morocco and one from Algeria, aged 16, 17, 26, 44 years old, were stopped by two male Slovenian officers wearing blue uniform while they was walking on a path in Slovenia (approximate coordinates 45.8703785, 15.1706825 SLO), on the 2nd February 2020 at approximately 05.30 in the morning.

When the two policemen saw the group of respondents, one policemen drew a gun and from a distance of around four metres aimed it at the group. Meanwhile the other officer shined a flashlight on the group. The officer aiming the gun reportedly said:

***“If you run, I am gonna shot you”***

The group of respondents were forced into a line “one by one”, guarded by the two policemen and walked to an official van which was parked nearby. Two other police officers arrived at the scene. The respondents affirm that the two police officers who caught them remained in the area of apprehension, while the newly arrived authorities dealt with the group.

At this point, the transit group were asked their nationalities and ages by the police. The respondents were frisked and all their personal belongings and clothes were taken – such as jackets, jumpers, power-banks, money, phones as well as all the backpack.

The officers pushed the group roughly into the van and in several occasions held some of the transit group by their bodies in order to hit them in the back of the head with their hands. Describing one of the officers conduct the respondent said:

***“The guy police officer was full racist and pushed us, taking pleasure of it”***

In the windowless van, the transit group reported reckless driving, and uncomfortable air conditioning on. The respondents noticed that the van stopped for a long time, suggesting:

***“He stopped for a coffee... and put the air conditioning hardest”***

***“Police officers are playing with us”***

The transit group suggest the trip took around one hour. The officers didn't say to respondents where they were being taken. The respondents just noticed they were at a “border police station”, supposing this to be the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

When the transit group got out of the van, they described one female and one male police officer wearing blue uniforms standing before them. These officers forcibly pushed each group member into a cell described as very cold, wet, without light and with an “horrible smell”. The conditions were referred to as follows:

***“It's not an acceptable situation for civilized country. It is like if you were in a Third-World country”***

Once the transit group were all in the cell, one male authority removed them one by one in order to frisk their bodies for possessions and beat them again with hands and kicks. The group explains that the male officer could not find anything when he was frisking them because the two previously policemen who already frisked the respondents had taken everything: “they let us [removed] anything” adds a respondent.

***“They frisks you, they beat you and after they put you into the cell in a savage way”.***

One respondent reports feeling “traumatized” by the “incessant” laughter from the policewoman who was witness to the frisking and beating. The group on the move was unable to recall the total number of police officers present at the police station because “we [the group of the respondents] was downstairs and they [the police officers] was upstairs” says one of the respondents.

During the detention, the group of respondents didn't have access to food nor water and the cell's toilet was broken.

***“I was shouting: ‘sir, please, we just want water’. He didn't respond even to us”***

After what the group of respondents felt was three hours spent in the cell, they were forced to make a line to go into an official van which was waiting for them in front of the police station.

The group reports that roughly nine Croatians officers – a combination of officers matching the description of regular police and Intervention officers – were around the vehicle. Inside the van where they were loaded the same male and female Croatian officers that put them into the cell were present.

The group were driven for around 1.30 hours. The respondents report reckless driving in a van without windows and with the conditioning air on to an uncomfortable degree. After driving on what the respondents perceived as the highway, the van took smaller roads. The group of respondents supposedly heard two other cars in front of theirs at this moment.

After roughly 30 minutes of reckless drive on the road, the van stopped in a border location between Croatia / Bosnia-Herzegovina (45°13'11.0"N 15°51'56.6"E).

At this point, three cars was present. One official car and one other official van; in addition to the first one in which the group of respondents had been conveyed. The transit group reports ten male and one female police officers being present. They was wearing the same kind of combination of uniform that the nine police officers outside the police station had worn. By this way, the group of respondents supposes that it was the same officers. *"It was like mafia"* shared one of the respondents when recalling the treatment at the border.

One of the policemen opened the van's doors to remove the group. One of the officers asked the respondents to take their backpacks (which were in the car).

***"They said take your bags. During ten seconds we had hope they will give us back but after they said put the bags on the ground".***

The respondents feel that this action was on purpose to make fun of them, leading them to believe that the officers would return their possessions. The transit group saw some of the officers smiling.

***"They was playing with us. It's a psychological torture"***

The officers ordered the group to leave Croatia. One of the respondents asked for the road they should take to go back to Velika Kladuša (BiH).

***"We are on the forest, we didn't have any idea about the direction to take"***

After what, one of the officer beat him with a baton.

***"If you ask something, they hit you"***

***“I was walking around saying please give me my phone and give us our bags and one policemen hit me with the baton.”***

Around 09.00, the transit group left the pushback site to go back to Velika Kladuša (BiH), they saw smoke coming from where the officers had piled their bags.

***“I saw the smoke coming from the place where we was with the police, so I think their was burning our bags. They burned all my documents, pictures, driver’s licenses, degrees from school, my passport... I had all my life with me, I didn’t know.”***

The group on the move walk for what felt like 2.30 hours and arrived in Velika Kladuša (BiH) at 12:00 3rd February 2020. Describing the way the Croatian officer treated them, one respondent said:

***“They didn’t give to us the chance to speak with them. My friend wanted to speak with them. I said to him no because they will butcher you. They was like monsters with only one thing to do in their life : punch, doing bad things. They was like black heart.”***

23/01/2020

## **“I NEED FOOD, I DON’T EAT FOR THREE OR FOUR DAYS”**

**Date and time:** January 23, 2020 05:00

**Location:** near Buhača, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.189944, 15.783335

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 18, 19, 20, 31 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 police officers (2 male, 1 female) with black uniform and two dogs with muzzle and no leash, 1 white van; 4 police officers (3 male, 1 female) with black uniforms and Croatian emblem; 3 male police officers with black uniforms; 1 male and 1 female Croatian police officers; 3 Croatian police officers; 2 officers with black uniforms and ski mask

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A transit group of four men from Morocco aged 18, 19, 20, 31 were attempting to pass through Slovenia in late January 2020. They were in the woods near Jagodnik (SLO) at approximate coordinates 45.870301, 15.170671 when the respondent decided to head towards the nearest village to search for food at approximately 11:00 on 22nd January 2020.

***“I need food, I don’t eat for three or four days, I want to see people [to ask for food], I am very hungry”***

The respondent was stopped in the street by three police officers (two male, and one female) wearing black uniforms. They had two dogs with them wearing muzzles and no leash. One white van without any “police” emblem was also there. The respondent does not remember whether there was any official emblem on police’s uniforms. Police asked the respondent his name, his country of origin and where his friends were, supposing that the rest of the group was hiding somewhere. Police then set the dogs to search in the woods for the rest of the group.

The respondent was loaded into the white van and brought to a police station. The driving was extremely erratic so the respondent threw up during the travel, which lasted roughly 20 minutes. “*Ghaloufa [police van] is bad car*”, the respondent says. The van had no windows and was cold.

At the police station there were ten or eleven officers wearing black uniforms with the Croatian emblem, four of which (three male, one female) dealt with the respondent. The respondent had fingerprints of the index and middle finger of his right hand taken as well as frontal pictures of his face. Police also checked the respondent’s phone, accessing his media and his maps on the app “MapsMe”.

The respondent was asked for his personal information (name, age, country of origin) and had to fill in a document which asked for information about his recent travel history: when did you arrive in Bosnia-Herzegovina, how long did you stay in Turkey, Montenegro and other transit countries? The respondent was then forced to sign a document written in English and Arabic. He did not have a chance to read the document as the police told him to hurry up. No official translator was present in the police station during this period.

The respondent said he spent twelve hours at the police station and was forced to take off his clothes before entering the cell. After a couple of hours, the rest of his group arrived at the police station. They were all also forced to take off their clothes before entering the cell.

At approximately 01:00 (on 23rd January 2020), the group in transit – still without clothing – were loaded into a police van and driven to Croatia by three male officers wearing black uniforms. After approximately 30 minutes, the van arrived at a police station in Croatia, but the respondent could not recall where they were taken as it was dark. Slovenian police gave the

group their telephones back – which were all now broken – and delivered them to the Croatian police. One male and one female Croatian police officers put the group in a cell, where they spent four hours. In the cell, there was a squat toilet, fixed cameras and it was very cold. The group asked for food and water but police denied them both.

After four hours, at approximately 04:00 or 05:00 on the 23rd January 2020, the group were loaded in a police van with three Croatian police officers. Due to the erratic driving of the van, the respondent threw up again. At the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina (approximate coordinates 45.189944, 15.783335), there were two officers waiting for them, wearing black uniforms and ski masks. One by one, the respondents exited the van and the officers told them to go back to Bosnia. The group walked for roughly three kilometres back to the city of Velika Kladusa (BiH).

14/01/2020

**“THE OFFICERS ASKED FOR MORE MONEY JUST WITH THE AIM TO BEAT US MORE. THEY ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO HIT YOU.”**

**Date and time:** January 14, 2020 21:00

**Location:** Velika Kladuša, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.195617351557054, 15.791244197006229

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 27 and unknown , from: Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, hard jostle

**Police involved:** 2 male Slovenian police officers, 1 official van ; 2 males Croatian officers black clothing, 1 unofficial car ; 2 males Croatian police, 1 official van ; 9 male Croatian officers in black clothing and ski masks, 1 female officer in black clothing and ski mask

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 27-year old man from Morocco was stopped by police in Slovenia (45.870301, 15.170671 SLO) while he was walking on a path close to the roadside on the 14th January 2020 at 15.00.

Two Slovenian policemen wearing official uniforms and with an official police car saw the respondent, they stopped him and called their colleagues who arrived in an unmarked “jeep”. The officers held the respondent for around 10 minutes until this jeep vehicle arrived. Inside the

jeep there were two officers dressed in black, who asked the respondent to enter the vehicle. The officers did not inform the respondent where they were driving him, and only asked him about his nationality. The jeep started and left the path, but the official car stayed at that same location where the respondent had been apprehended.

### ***“It was a trap. The car was hidden, waiting for immigrants”***

The respondent, who did not dare to ask questions, felt that the drive lasted was about 30 minutes until they reached a police station in Croatia. The respondent was not able to recognize in which city he was.

When the car arrived at the police station, at about 15.40, the two policemen who had been driving the car brought him directly into the cell where the respondent remained under the officers' surveillance for four hours. The respondent did not have access to food, water or toilet. *“I did”*, says the respondent, meaning that he had to “relieve himself” on the floor, in the cell without any intimacy because there was no toilet.

At the police station, no officer spoke with the respondent. All the respondent's personal belongings (backpack, power bank and money) had been taken anyway before entering in the cell by one of the two policemen.

### ***“They treated me like a dog”***

Around 19.00, another official van arrived at the police station with two policemen. The respondent noticed that one of the officers was very young, without being able to specify his exact age. The youngest policemen was the most aggressive *“he was mean and very aggressive with me”* says the respondent. He reports that the driver waited inside the car. Only the young officer entered inside the police station to take the respondent out off cell to the van. The respondent saw the policemen taking all his belongings into the van: *“he brought a bag with my phone, my money, my power bank”*. The respondent reports that the policemen pushed him hard to enter into the van, where nine people from Algerians, Syrians and Pakistanis were already inside. There were now ten people in the detained transit group.

In the van, there were no windows, cold air conditioning was on and the driving was reckless and abrupt. The respondent reports throwing up during the drive due to the poor driving.

After what the respondents felt was two hours ( around 21.00), the group arrived at the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina, close to the town of Velika Kladuša (approximate coordinates 45.19632, 15.80237 BIH). The respondent reports that when they arrived at the border, there were approximately ten police officers including one woman. One of those officers opened the doors with violence to get the the transit group out of the van; *“it was the ski masks”* says the respondent. The officers were wearing black clothes, ski masks and wielded guns and batons. The respondent reports that when the doors opened he saw his personal belongings in a bag next to the group of officers

*“All my important personal belongings was here, including my fanny bag. I knew that my backpack was far away”.*

The respondent suggests that the officers knew that the group was already out of money because the previous policemen had taken all they had, so that the officers were only looking for a pretext to hit them.

*“They steal the phones. The officers asked for more money just with the aim to beat us more. They are looking for something to hit you ”*

To get out of the van, the respondent affirms that the officers shouted to the group on the move “go, go, go and one by one!”. The officers put the flashlights in the eyes of the respondents to dazzle them so that they could not recognize the authorities faces. Each member of the group (ten in total) was beaten with a baton when they got out of the van, and were then forced to run back into BiH.

09/01/2020

## “THEY BEAT ME IN THE HEAD”

**Date and time:** January 9, 2020 00:00

**Location:** close to Poljana (BiH)

**Coordinates:** 45.22360115670229, 15.927220062753523

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: 20 - 43 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian officers in dark uniforms, undisclosed number in police station, 7 Croatian officers in black uniforms, undisclosed number in police station

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 8th January 2020, a transit group of six Afghani men were walking in woodland in southern Slovenia. The respondent suggests that a member of the public observed the six people close to a village and called the police. The location was suggested to be approximately

100km from the capital Ljubljana, but the respondents phone was taken during the incident so he was unsure of the exact place.

It was around midday when two authorities dressed in what the respondent described as “uniform police Slovenia” arrived with a car. The uniforms were described as a dark black colour. The two officers stopped the group and ordered them to remove their bags. The officers asked if they had knives or sharp objects in their possession and searched all six men.

At the site of apprehension the officers asked the transit group:

***“From which side you came? Where do you come from?”***

The six were transported by a police vehicle to a station nearby. The transit group were then removed from the vehicle and held inside the station, where further police officers questioned and processed them. The officers asked them further questions:

***“Do you have any documents?”***

***“How did you come to Slovenia?”***

***How many people are in your group?”***

The questioning was conducted in a room where officers also asked the group to sign paperwork with their personal information (“personal quiz”). The respondent was not however given enough time to read the documents being signed, and therefore did not understand what it said. He stated:

***“they didn’t give me a chance to know information”***

There was no translation available while at the station. The officers also fingerprinted the group. Then they were led into a cell and detained for what the respondent suggests was approximately 12 hours.

The respondent describes how during this time he was feeling very sick, but did not receive any support.

***“time at night in rain, my condition was really cold and I had fever”***

***“[During the journey] I drank dirty water, I have diarrhea and vomiting, they didn’t give you tablets”***

The respondent states that in the early hours of 9th January 2020, the Slovenian police loaded the transit group of six into a van and drove them a short distance to the border with Croatia. At the border the group were received by Croatian officers and driven to a police station in Croatia described as “jail”.

Describing the transit groups treatment during detention in the police station in Croatia the respondent said:

***“They didn’t give you water or food to eat”***

The respondent describes being held in a cell in this police station for approximately three hours. After which, the group of six Afghani men were loaded into a Croatian police van. The van also had another 16 passengers detained in the back. These people were from another transit group and the respondent describes how they included both Pakistani and Syrian males (all over 18 years old).

The group were driven for around two hours and the respondent says the journey included lots of swerving by the driver which induced sickness in the detained passengers. The respondent had fever during his detention in the police stations (HR/SLO) and became very sick in the back of the van. Several other people in the back also began throwing up:

***“they are vomiting in that car”***

The van stopped and the combined transit group of 22 people were unloaded at a remote spot on the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina. They were ordered to remove their clothes and shoes which were then confiscated. The respondent describes the darkness (it was early hours of 9th January 2020) and seeing seven Croatian police officers dressed in black uniforms. Describing how the officers had arranged themselves at the back doors of the van the respondent said:

***“They stood both sides”***

The respondent describes seeing a large stone (likely to have been a border marker). The police beckoned the transit group “one by one” and then attacked them with batons and fists, making a corridor effect between themselves and the stone marker. Referring to the assault on his body the respondent said:

***“they beat me in the head, I can’t... then everything after that, [my] arms and hands”***

The respondent says that for ten minutes after this attack his head was weak and he remained very dizzy. The police ordered the group to “go and run”. They were forced back into BiH via a small river which the respondent said reached up to his shins, soaking their legs.

05/01/2020

## “WE JUST WANT TO LIVE A GOOD LIFE”

**Date and time:** January 5, 2020 21:00

**Location:** near Buhača, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.194708, 15.790146

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 20, 22, 23, 26, 31 years old person(s), age: 5 , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), gunshots, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 male Slovenian police officers with blue uniforms with the Slovenian emblem on their shoulder and chest, 1 police van, 1 police car; 1 Slovenian female police officer, 2 Slovenian male police officers; (unknown number of) Croatian police officers with blue uniforms; 4 Croatian male police officers; 8 Croatian officers with ski mask and batons

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At approximately 09:00 on the 05/01/2020 the group in transit were stopped by three male Slovenian police officers just after crossing the border with Croatia (approximately 45.683068, 14.566864). The group consisted of five men from Morocco aged 20, 22, 23, 26, 31. The officers were wearing blue uniforms with the Slovenian emblem on their shoulder and chest and had one police van, and one police car with them.

Initially, the respondents tried to escape from police who were shouting at them “stop, stop, stop”. However when the police fired a single gunshot into the air, the group in transit stopped. “I am scared, all the group [is scared]. Police takes a gun, we stop”. The respondent says that police:

***“takes me everything, all the clothes, money, phone, backpacks, everything. And food. Everything. Now I don’t have anything”.***

The group in transit were then loaded into a police van which drove them to a police station. The respondent did not know where they went because the police had confiscated their phones and they could not see out of the windows. The drive lasted approximately two hours and the respondent said that it was very erratic.

At the police station, the group in transit dealt with three police officers, one woman and two men. The group had their fingerprints taken (right index finger) and were asked to disclose personal information like their country of origin and destination. The respondent told the officers, *"I go to Italy"*. The group were forced to sign documents which they could not understand and no official translator was present. The group in transit saw their request of asylum denied. Speaking of the time spent in the police station, the respondent remembers, *"it was cold, we had no shoes"*.

From the Slovenian police station, the group in transit were driven to Croatia, where the Slovenian and Croatian police met in what the respondent calls *"a village"*. Police did not tell to the group where they were going nor could the respondents see out of the van. At *"the village"*, the Slovenian police delivered the group and all of their personal belongings to the Croatian police, who then transferred them to a Croatian police station.

At the station, there were *"many police"* officers present wearing blue uniforms. The group in transit were again required to disclose their personal information like: full name, country of origin, age and then again were forced to sign documents which they did not understand with no official translator present. *"I don't know this language, maybe language Croatia"*, says the respondent. The respondents asked for asylum but were ignored by police, which also denied them access to food and water. *"Racist, [they say] no [to the request of asylum]"*, says the respondent. The respondent believes the group spent roughly one hour at this location.

The group in transit was then loaded into a police van the with four male Croatian police officers. The group was driven to the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina (approximately 45.194708,15.790146) and the respondent recalls that the driving was reckless and erratic. After roughly four-five hours of driving, the van arrived at the border at around 20:00 or 21:00. *"I was scared"* says the respondent.

The respondent does not remember the exact number of Croatian officers that were waiting at the border but he judges that there were at least 8 of them.

***"I don't know, I was scared, I don't see anything, kagool [police ski mask], I don't see, I don't see"***

The respondent said that the Croatian police officers who drove them delivered all of their personal belongings to these officers in waiting, who then set everything on fire. *"Croatian police does not give me back my phone, my clothes..."*. The officers were waiting for the group in a line, wearing ski masks and had batons. The group in transit had to exit the van and run past the officers while they beating them with batons. *"Go, go, go, go to Bosnia"*, the officers shouted at the group.

From the border, the group slowly walked back to the city of Velika Kladusa (BiH). The respondent remembers that the journey took a long time due to tiredness and the injuries

sustained from the beating. “I am sick in my leg”, says the respondent. Supposedly, the respondents reached the city around 5:00 on the 06/01/2020.

“I want to go to Europe to work, for my family, for a good life for my family. We just want to live a good life”.

15/11/2019

## “THE RESPONDENT EXPRESSED INTENT FOR ASYLUM AND THE SLOVENIAN OFFICERS SAID “NO””

**Date and time:** November 15, 2019 05:30

**Location:** Apprehended near Novo Mesto, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.803391, 15.159657

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: respondent 27 years old , from: Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 1 blue Slovenian police van, 3 Slovenian officers in black uniforms (2 male and 1 female), 1 male Arabic translator; 1 white Slovenian police van; 1 black Croatian police van, 2 male Croatian police officers, 6 male Croatian officers in black uniform and ski masks

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent walked for seven days (08/11/2019 – 15/11/2019) and was arrested on the side of the road in Novo Mesto, Slovenia at 05:30 on 15th November 2019 (at coordinates 45.803391, 15.159657). Three members of his group ran away but the respondent was caught by 3 Slovenian officers in black uniform (*Slovenska policija* written on the gilet of officers) – one female and two male – and one official translator. They surrounded him with their guns drawn and the respondent knelt on the ground with his hands in the air. The respondent expressed intent for asylum and the police said “NO”. In one blue Slovenian police van, the respondent was loaded and driven for ten minutes to the police station in Novo Mesto (R584+R7 Novo mesto, Slovenia).

At the police station the respondent was given food, water, and access to a toilet. He was forced to sign a document written in Slovenian (translated in person by the translator) which

gave him a €500 fine. The officers made the respondent hold a piece of paper with his full name written down and took his picture. The respondent spent two hours in the police station.

At 07:30, two male Slovenian officers drove the respondent in one white van for 20-30 minutes to a police station near the Croatian border. It is likely the respondent was taken to 'Metlika border police station' (J8PF+F2 Metlika, Slovenia). The respondent spent one hour standing out front of the police station, and then at 09:00 he was taken into a cell, where he spent 11 hours.

At 23:00, 1 black police van with two male Croatian police officers picked up the respondent and drove for between 40 minutes/one hour. Inside the van already there were eight Pakistani people and one Moroccan. The van drove very fast and erratically (swerving left and right, breaking at random) and the aircon was on full-blast. Some members of the group in transit were crying and sick (vomiting).

At 00:00 on 16th November 2019, the van stopped near the border with six Croatian officers in black uniforms and ski masks waiting. The officers fired one gunshot into the air, and then made a fire to burn the groups clothing, shoes and bags. The officers stole their money (€150 from the respondent), telephones and power-banks. The respondents glasses were taken, smashed, and thrown into the fire. The officers made a line 20 meters apart (going towards the Bosnian border) and forced the group in transit to one-by-one to walk past them, spending what felt like 10 minutes beating each individual with batons and kicking them. The group in transit spent roughly one hour at this location, before being pushed back into BiH.

The group in transit then walked 1.5 hours to a small town in BiH where locals gave them shoes, clothes, money and food. At 03:00 on 16th November 2019 the respondent arrived back in Velika Kladusa via foot.

**15/11/2019**

## **“YOU WILL NOT GET FOOD UNTIL WE GET MONEY”**

**Date and time:** November 15, 2019 00:00

**Location:** NW of Apsepci (HR)

**Coordinates:** 45.09088688374464, 19.090872783129043

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 11 person(s), age: 19-30 , from: Afghanistan, Syria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), sexual assault, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 5 Slovenian border officers, 4 Serbian border officials, 2 Serbian police officers, 2 police van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On Wednesday 13th November 2019 a young couple from Tunisia hid in a train, leaving Sid in the direction of Italy. They stayed in their hideout for almost 24 hours until apprehension in Slovenia the following day (14th November 2019). Having crossed the border from Croatia just before, they were detected by five Slovenian border officials conducting a screening of the train. Being well disguised and hard to reach, the officers had to use a “long metal stick” to poke and swing for the couple in order to make them descend. The two were then walked to the police station inside the train station.

Inside they were taken to the detention area and met by different officers. They had their information taken, as well as their fingerprints, pictures, their passports and phones and the amount of 500 EUR. The frisking of the female respondent was conducted by a female officer. When they had asked for asylum in Slovenia, they were met with this response by authorities.

***“This is not our job. We call police to take you.”***

For the next 3-4 hours they had to wait in the detention area. Being afraid of what might happen to them and felt like they were being treated as criminals, the couple trusted in every word the authorities present were saying to them, even when they had asked for their passports back.

***“You get them from police”***

When a big white police van appeared, three Croatian officers were in the front. The couple was ordered to enter the back of the van, where they encountered six other people also being transported to Croatia. Their ride would take around 1hr 15 minutes and ended inside a Croatian border police station. The group of eight was then led into a detention cell of around 5 to 3 meters with two windows. One window showed the inside of the station, an open yard with their transport vehicle and “many” police officers inside. The other window showed a river and a bridge that revealed a border checkpoint, allegedly Slovenian on the other side.

Being held up in a small room with the other people and in completely uncertainty of what was going to happen, the female respondent became very worried, which resulted in her crying and starting to sweat first, until she fainted and – as her husband described – her kidneys began cramping. He then called immediately for help. Two officers took her by the arms and carried her outside, leaving the husband with the rest of the group inside the cell. He would not see her for the next six hours, nor would he get any information as to what was happening to her.

The woman was brought to a hospital in nearby Zagreb. She herself remembered waking up in the hospital, being guarded by a male police officer. While there was no translator present she understood as much from the doctor informing her, that she was to undergo surgery the following day. According to her statement he also handed a paper with the diagnosis and operative report to the officer present. However, she was transported back to the police station by two officers, ignoring the doctors advise. She received no food whatsoever during her stay.

While his wife was away, the respondent kept waiting with the others in the cell. As their detention grew longer they asked the officers present for water and food. At first they were denied. When they repeatedly kept asking, one officer encountered:

***“You will not get food until we get money”***

One of the other inmates had 20 EUR hidden during his initial apprehension and frisk search. He handed it to the officer. Some 15 minutes later the group received a little water and crackers.

When his wife finally arrived back from the hospital, nothing had changed for the group. They were waiting inside the small cell another 15 hours with no mattresses or other means for resting provided. They had been asking for asylum several times during their detention and always been denied.

***“When we get you to centre in Zagreb, you can ask.”***

When they were removed from the cell sometime in the afternoon of November 15th 2019, the eight people were loaded into the back of a van similar to the one they entered the day before. Two officers drove them to Zagreb, where they were quickly transferred to another set of police in Zagreb (that is being loaded into another white van of the same kind, together with 3 further people). The van then started its trip direction Serbia.

At one point somewhere in the interior of Croatia, the van came to make a stop at an empty parking lot. One by one, the people were ordered to descend the vehicle. Outside each of the group would undergo a strip search to the naked skin by the two male officers. The female respondent was submitted to the same procedure, being touched in private parts of her body. After the undignified strip search had ended without results for the officers, the journey continued another hour.

Again one by one the group had to leave the van, this time for their push-back to Serbia. The two officers waited outside, armed with a “metal stick” with which they would strike for the people following their previously indicted directions towards Serbia. Both respondents had been hit on their backs but managed to make a run without severe injuries. They found their way back on the Serbian side of the border, and made their way back to Sid on foot. They arrived there in the early morning hours of November 16th, without money, passports and mobile phones.

29/10/2019

## “HE ASKED FOR HIS INHALER AND THE OFFICER TOLD HIM, "NO."”

**Date and time:** October 29, 2019 18:00

**Location:** Dolž, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.762283, 15.251647

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 25, 29, 30, 33, 39 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, denial of medicine

**Police involved:** 7/8 Slovenian officers in blue uniforms, 1 Slovenian police van; 10 Croatian police in all black uniforms with the Croatian flag embroidered on the arm and ski masks; 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On 29th October 2019 a group in transit consisting of five men from Algeria and Morocco were apprehended in Dolž (SLO) at approximately 18.00. The group was close to the town center when they were stopped by seven or eight male Slovenian officers in blue uniforms. The group was transported in a Slovenian police van to a police station.

The respondent believes they were taken to Metlika border police station (45.635993, 15.322618). At the station the respondents were given documents to sign asking for personal information, including name and family name. The document was in Slovenian and Arabic. Officers then took the respondents' fingerprints using two fingers on one hand and one finger on the opposite hand and photos were taken of their faces. The respondent expressed intent for asylum but did not receive an answer. There was no translators present. The group was detained from 18.00 on 29th October 2019 and slept in the station. At 10.00 on 30th October 2019 the group was transported by Croatian police in a white Croatian van.

The group was taken to a police station in Croatia but is unsure of the location because the van had no windows in the rear and their mobile devices were confiscated. At the station in Croatia they were detained until about 12.30. They were denied food and water and had no translator. The respondent stated,

“*Police Slovenia good, police Croatia no good.*”

At approximately 12.30 the group in transit was again transported in a Croatian police van with no windows in the rear. They were driven for about 2.5 hours and report that the officer drove recklessly, making quick turns which made them nauseous. Two members of the group vomited in the van.

The vehicle stopped at approximately 15.00 at the HR/BiH border near the Šturlić BCP. There were ten Croatian police in all black uniforms with the Croatian flag embroidered on the arm and three of those officers were also wearing ski masks. One officer who was wearing a ski mask was holding the documents which the group had signed at the station in Slovenia.

The officer called them individually by name and then beat them using batons and sticks from trees, which were about two meters long. The respondent said that the officers had the sticks prepared prior to the group exiting the van. The respondent's leg was targeted, drawing a scratch and bruising.

*Red mark from strike by Croatian officer's baton.*

The group was forced to remove their jackets and several of the Croatian police threw their jackets into the river. The officers searched the respondents' pockets and confiscated all remaining mobile phones, power banks, and wallets. The respondent also had an inhaler which was confiscated. He asked for the inhaler to use it because he felt his asthma was becoming an issue, the officer said, "No.". Then the group were ordered out of Croatia, and into BiH.

**26/10/2019**

## **"NOT ONE BREAD"**

**Date and time:** October 26, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Obrežje, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.84478618034518, 15.694835548214428

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 17, 29 , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 8 Slovenian border officers, 5 Croatian border officers, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The two companions from Teheran, Iran, embarked on their journey to Croatia during the night. Starting in north-eastern Bosnia, they crossed the border (via the Sava river) and walked for three nights. They boarded a truck at around 03:00 on 25th October 2019. Hidden inside, they waited until the driver continued his journey at around 07:00. For the next few hours they stayed inside waited. According to the respondents statement, the truck made a long stop in Zagreb after which it continued its ride.

In the afternoon of October 25<sup>th</sup> the vehicle reached the border crossing to Slovenia at Obrezje (45.8465975, 15.6938655). Passing the scanner, the driver was pulled over for a screening of his trailer, after one of the border agents apparently detected the irregular canvas of the truck where the men had entered. The respondents were then quickly detected by Slovenian authorities who opened the back door and ordered the group to step outside the vehicle, to be put into border custody in a detention cell next to the border station. The respondent mentioned a total of eight officers dressed in dark blue uniforms. After the Slovenian border officials contacted their Croatian colleagues, the two men waited there for two hours until their arrival. They were then transferred to the Croatian side by foot, having their hands cuffed behind their backs.

Once at the Croatian border checkpoint they were led into the detention cabin. Inside, the men found themselves among five to six Croatian border officials, being identified as *Temelnija* police, that conducted a strip search on them. Following the respondents statement the officers confiscated their phones, backpacks (containing clothes) and their belts. Being ordered to hand over their money, one of the men obeyed by issuing 150 € from a pocket of his cargo pants, not mentioning a further 350 € concealed in a secret pocket of his jacket. As one officer detected the hidden money, the men received several strokes to the head by the officers hand.

***“Police said – ‘give me money’ – I give him money, 150 €  
[points at cargo pant] He said – ‘All money?’ – I say Yes.  
Then find other [points at secret pocket] Get very angry”  
[Imitating beatings to the head]***

When recalling the confiscation, the man suggested he witnessed the officer noting down the amount of “100 €” instead of the 500 € he had actually seized. The respondent received another slap on the head as he made a comment about it. The men then had their photos taken as well as their fingerprints [index finger]. They were ordered to write down their full names, as well as the names of their father and mother. They were also handed documents to sign, which were not issued in Farsi. No translator was present during their time in custody. The procedure was followed by a stay in a small detention cell, according to the respondent 2m to 5m in size. According to the respondent this lasted approximately 24hrs.

The respondent stated that, within the period of his detention, he was withdrawn twice from his cell for sessions of beatings. The violence, that in total would last around 60 minutes and was carried out by [at least] two officers, consisted of fist punches, kicks and knees to the stomach area, head and extremities. The respondent further demonstrated his head being smashed against the cell bars, as well as receiving several hits to the face while being restraint by another officer. He was then be ordered back into the cell to spend the night.

The transit group was denied any form of food or drinks, even after they had asked for it.

“*[we received] not one bread.*”

After the detention, on the evening of October 26<sup>th</sup>, they were taken out of the cell and loaded into the back of a white van, by two officers. After a ride of around three hours they were released at the border to Serbia near Sid (45.1553459, 19.1742093). The officers told them to walk straight ahead, which they did. Late at night they reached Sid and found a place to pass the night in an abandoned house.

**24/10/2019**

## “THE MINOR WAS FORCED TO SIGN DOCUMENTS AND TOLD BY THE OFFICER 'YOU WERE BORN IN 2000'”

**Date and time:** October 24, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Veliki Cerovec, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.743586, 15.22657

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 24 person(s), age: 16, 24, 26 (ages of original transit group) , from: Yemen, Western Sahara

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian officers blue uniforms, 1 Slovenian police vehicle, 7 Croatian police in black uniforms, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information 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

On 24th October a group of two men from Western Sahara and one minor from Yemen were travelling in Slovenia. In the afternoon they were stopped by two Slovenian authorities in blue uniforms in Veliki Cerovec (SLO).

The group in transit was brought to a Slovenian police vehicle. The respondent believes they were taken to Metlika border police station (SLO), coordinates 45.636281, 15.322302. The respondent expressed intent for asylum and received no response from the officer who he tried to speak with. At the station their fingerprints were taken and they were forced to sign

five different documents in the Slovenian language. There was no translator present. Each person was called up to a desk one by one to sign the papers.

***“They force you to sign.”***

The respondent wanted to refuse to sign the document which he did not understand, but was forced to. When signing the documents the 16 year old boy with the group told the officer:

***“I am a minor.”***

The officer told him:

***“No you are not, you were born in 2000.”***

The minor had his camp ID and a photo of his documents which stated his birth year as 2002. On the document the officer wrote the individual's birth year as “2000.” He was forced to sign the same documents as the adults and was not offered a social worker or translator to speak with. The respondent asked to keep the documents which they signed but was denied.

The group was detained for 3.5 hours in the station.

During the night the group was transported by one Croatian police van, and driven to a police station in Croatia. The respondent is unsure of the location of the station because there were no windows to see out of the van and he saw no signs for the alleged police station. The group was detained for six hours in what the respondent described as a “*tiny room*” with no furniture. After this detention in Croatia, the three respondents were put into one Croatian police van with 21 other people. Some were standing, some sat on the two benches, and some sat on the floor. The authority driving was speeding, making wide turns and sudden stops. There were no windows on the van.

The van stopped on the Croatian border near to Šturlić (BiH). Seven male Croatian police officers in black uniforms demanded everyone to give their mobile phones. The group of three in transit had two mobile phones which were confiscated. One officer then said, “*Go to Bosnia*” and the individuals headed towards the center of Šturlić. The group then walked back to Velika Kladuša (BiH).

**15/10/2019**

**““ALL 8 OFFICERS TOOK TURNS BEATING US””**

**Date and time:** October 15, 2019 01:00

**Location:** Preloka, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.464284, 15.333832

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 17, 25, 27 , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian border officers in blue uniforms, 2 Slovenian officers wearing black uniforms with a serpent emblem on the sleeves, 1 Slovenian police van; 2 Croatian police vans, 8 Croatian Intervention police wearing black uniforms with the Croatian flag sewn on the sleeves (6/8 officers wearing black ski masks)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On October 14th 2019, a group of three people in transit from Syria, aged 17, 26, 27, were stopped by five police officers in Preloka (SLO) shortly after crossing the border from Croatia.

Three of the officers in Slovenia were wearing blue uniforms. Two officers described as Slovenian border officials were wearing all black uniforms with the emblem that the respondent described as a “*serpent or a cobra*” on the upper arm sleeves.

The transit group were brought to a police station at 14.00 and detained there for approximately nine hours with no food or water.

The respondent was given a document which asked what the group's destination was. The respondent said “*Slovenia*” and the authority writing the document instead wrote or typed that the group's intended destination was “*Croatia*.” The respondent expressed intent for asylum by saying:

“*I want asylum in Slovenia,*”

But the officer upon hearing this replied:

“*No, no asylum for you here. You go back to Croatia.*”

The respondent did not understand everything that was written on the document and was not provided a translator. At approximately 23.00, the respondent stated that Croatian Intervention officers from came to the police station in Slovenia to transport the group out of the country.

The transit group were driven into Croatia, the respondent stated that they were not taken to a police station. When the group were in Croatia the respondent again said, *"I want asylum."* The respondent clarified his requests, stating:

***"I want asylum in Croatia."***

What was described as a special police officer in all black told him:

***"Go to camp in Bosnia."***

They were transported in a police van that the respondent described as feeling more like a *"box"* because there was no air circulating and the temperature was extremely hot. All three of the group members reported vomiting while in the van because of the poor air quality and the officer's reckless driving. One respondent claims he vomited four times during the drive. The group in transit was driven in the van for approximately two hours, bringing them to the border with BiH in the early hours of the morning.

The group was commanded to exit the van one by one (at approximately 01:00 on 15th October 2019). Outside of the van was a total of what was described as eight Intervention Officers forming a narrow corridor with four officers on each side. Six of the officers appeared to have arrived in a second police van according to the respondent. The officers were described as *"Commandos with cagoules"* (the respondent described the officers in big police jackets which he stated had the Croatian flag sewn on the sleeve arms.)

As the respondent exited the van he reports being hit by the two officers closest to the van, then passed down to the next two officers who were standing across from each other. This pattern continued until the respondent had passed through the corridor of all eight officers who each took turns hitting the respondent with their fists. The other two members of the group then endured the same violence as they too exited the van and were beaten through this corridor of officers.

Once all three men in the group were outside of the van the respondents report being ordered to undress, and their clothes and shoes were thrown into a pile. An officer lit fire to their clothes and then another officer used a *"large piece of iron"* to break all three of their phones.

The officers used batons to hit the respondent *"everywhere"* and was reported to especially target his back by delivering more blows from the batons at this part of his body. According to the respondent, one officer stomped on the respondents' feet repeatedly with his heavy police boots.

The minor in the group was *"kicked like a ball"* and one officer hit him on the back and knocked him down onto the ground, then proceeded to kick the minor in his side (torso). The group was then forced to cross the border back into Bosnia wearing only their underwear, and having been severely beaten.

07/10/2019

**“POLICE WAS HUMILIATING ME, TELLING ME 'HA, YOU WANT TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM, WE WILL TAKE YOU TO A CAMP YES, TO A CAMP IN BOSNIA.'”**

**Date and time:** October 7, 2019 14:00

**Location:** 4km from Trieste (Italy), in Slovenian territory

**Coordinates:** 45.60983114051613, 13.878390797750512

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: Included 35 year old , 20 month and 9 month old infants , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** insulting, Psychological violence, screaming intimidating

**Police involved:** Slovenian officers with police cars, Croatian authorities with one van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, his wife, their two small children, along with two other men were travelling by vehicle to the Italian border. The van was stopped in Slovenia, 4 km from Trieste around 14:00 on 7th October 2019. The Slovenian police intervened by surrounding the car and pointing guns at the family.

They were made to get out from the car, the respondent was holding one child, his wife the other. The police was screaming at them, intimidating them. They were taken to a police station without explanation of what was going on.

***“We were closed in a room all walls made from cement and only one window with bars. There was no translator, no food, water, for hours. We were scared because the police kept screaming at us and we didn’t know what was going on.”***

They were detained for the whole night. There was a sign on the wall of the police station with Arabic translation saying that everyone has the right to apply for asylum.

***“Ha, it should be, everyone has the right to come here running from violence to experience more violence.”***

A translator arrived the next morning, 8th October, and the respondent clearly expressed to him their wish to apply for asylum in Slovenia, but the translator did not take him seriously, he kept insulting him and refused to translate his wishes.

***“I told him ‘I am from Syria’, he called me a liar. He kept yelling at me that I am liar. Police was humiliating me, telling me ‘ha, you want to apply for asylum, we will take you to a camp yes, to a camp in Bosnia.”***

The police was only interested in his connection to the smuggler, asking him questions and details about the relationship with smuggler and the deal they made (when, where, how much money, where did they go), they didn't accept his claim for asylum. After this interrogation they were delayed food again until mid day when the police came to their cell and told him that his wife and children will be taken to the camp in Ljubljana (SLO) if he agrees to go to court and testify. At first, he refused because they did not explain to him what was the court process about, but after they kept putting pressure on him for a few hours, he agreed to go to court, if they take his wife and children to the camp in Ljubljana.

The respondent trusted the police who then took his wife and children. He went to court and realized he would have to testify against the smuggler. After the court was finished he was taken to the police car.

***“I asked about my wife and children, I didn't know where they were. The police woman told me they were resting in camp, that they were happy and playing. She told me I am coming to join them.”***

He was disappointed to arrive to another police station, where they took his fingerprints and pictures before reuniting him with his family. His wife confirmed him that they had been in that police station the whole time and were never taken to camp. The next morning, now 9th October, they were served breakfast in a bag.

***“They told us to prepare to go to camp and that we will eat food they give us there because we will be late for breakfast.”***

They were put in a car and driven for 40 minutes, again disappointed when they realized they were brought to an official border crossing and delivered into Croatia. They were searched in front of everyone and put in a small room for seven hours where there was another Turkish man, he was beaten with sticks and kicked. The other two men from Syria from the initial transit group were also brought there. The room had no air, they weren't given any food, and one infant daughter started crying and throwing up.

The respondent asked to go outside with her, the police just kicked the door and yelled at him. After a while they were allowed to go out for five minutes. They were taken to a van and driven for 2.5 hours, still without being given food.

***“The police came with biscuits and cola in front of us and ate them while my children were crying hungry, they laughed at us.”***

The group were taken to a mountainous spot on evening of 9th October and shown with a flashlight the direction of Bosnia and told to walk there. They walked for 15 km before reaching the camp they stayed in, all without food or water, depending on the kindness of locals for support.

**01/10/2019**

## **“I FEAR MY LUNGS STOP WORKING”**

**Date and time:** October 1, 2019 17:00

**Location:** Brežice, Slovenia and Bregana, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.893702, 15.603285

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 19-28 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, water immersion, gunshots, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, tear gas cannister, use of a metal clamp to bruise individuals

**Police involved:** 5 Slovenian police in blue uniforms, 1 police van; 5 Croatian police officers in black with ski masks, 1 Croatian van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

A group of five men in transit from Algeria ages 19-28 crossed the border from Croatia to Slovenia on 1st October 2019.

The group in transit was walking across a highway bridge crossing over the river in Brežice, Slovenia when they were stopped by five Slovenian authorities in blue uniforms. One officer fired a pistol up into the air and shouted, “*Stop!*”.

The group was transported in a Slovenian police van across the border into Croatia, to the approximate coordinates 45.842466, 15.694193 in Bregana (HR). Here the group was transferred into a Croatian police van.

When the group was loaded into the van one of the attending Croatian officers fired a canister of tear gas into the van, then a second officer fired another tear gas canister into the van and closed the doors. The doors to the van were locked and the group was stuck inside with no

windows to open and no airflow. The respondent reports that his eyes were *“burning like fire”* and tears were running down his face, mucus dripping from his nose and his whole body broke out in a sweat in reaction to the gas.

### ***“I have asthma, I fear my lungs stop working”***

The respondent shared that he was asthmatic and feared his lungs were going to fail. Members of the group were coughing and struggling to breathe after being exposed to severe amounts of tear gas.

The group remained in the van for six hours. The respondent reports that the officer was driving recklessly by making quick, wide turns and making sudden stops.

The men were taken out of the van and five Croatian police wearing all black clothing with the Croatian flag on the upper sleeves and black ski masks were standing around the van's doors. The respondent noted that all five officers were carrying pistols and one officer had a large shotgun which he described as looking like a Kalashnikov.

### ***“They looked like military, not regular police.”***

One officer used a metal tool for opening nuts and pushed the metal into the respondent's thigh and proceeded to open the tool, close the tool, and twist the metal clamp around the respondent's skin leaving a deep purple colored bruise.

The officers beat the respondent and the group using their batons and delivered severe blows to their arms and backs. The police then forced all five members of the group to remove all of their clothing, leaving them in nothing but their underwear. One officer grabbed the respondent and pushed him into the river near the HR/BiH border.

Police took batons out and started to beat their backs again while yelling *“Go! Go!”* and *“Go to the camp”* as they forced the men towards the border. The respondent believes they were pushed from Croatian territory into an area near Klokot (BiH).

**01/10/2019**

**“THEY FIRED TWO GUNS INTO THE AIR AND YELLED  
“GO! GO TO BOSNIA!””**

**Date and time:** October 1, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Golo, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.902398, 14.531693

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 25, 27, 28, 33, 45 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, threatening with guns, gunshots, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian police officers, 1 Slovenian police van; unknown number of male Croatian police wearing black uniforms with the Croatian flag emblem, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On 30th September 2019 a group in transit, with five persons from Algeria (aged 25, 27, 28, 33, and 45), were stopped by police near Golo (SLO). The group was stopped after crossing a small road approximately 20 km from Ljubljana (SLO). A Slovenian police van was at the street crossing and spotted the group in transit. Two police officers, who appeared to be municipal police, exited the van with pistols drawn and pointed the pistols at the five transit group members. The respondent stated that the men were ordered at gun point to stop and sit down on the ground.

The police then took the respondent's phone and opened the application "Maps Me" and then the GPS application. The respondent suggested that the officer was looking to see the route which the transit group were traveling by.

The transit group was transported in the van to a police station. During the interview the respondent used an online map to identify the station where he thinks the group was taken to, asserting that he believed they were transported to Ribnica (SLO) police station. At the station all five men had their fingerprints taken. An officer took photos of their faces, then the group was forced to sign a document including their name and family names. The respondent was able to speak French with one officer and he expressed intent for asylum. To this verbal request for asylum he was denied. The officer told them:

***"No, go to Bosnia. Too many Algerians. Big problem."***

The group was detained overnight (30.9.2019). The next morning, on 1st October, the group was transported from Slovenia to Croatia in a police van. The respondent believed they may have been taken to Buzet (HR) police station near the Croatian border. This was based on being able to look at Maps Me during transport, where the respondent saw the police van was moving past Postonja (HR), which is located approximately halfway between the apprehension point at Golo (SLO) and the detention in Buzet (HR). The group was detained in this police station for approximately four hours.

At the station the respondent asked at separate times for food, water, and to have a cigarette. To this request the respondent was beaten with a baton by an officer in the station.

***“They give us no food, no water, no cigarette. We are treated like animals. I ask, ‘Hello police, water?’ and they shout ‘NO!’ They shout, they keep shouting and then they hit us.”***

One officer hit the respondent on his hands, arms, and shoulders with a baton. After the four hours in detention, including the beating by an officer, the group was again transported in a police van. The temperature inside the van was extremely cold according to the respondent.

The van stopped near the HR/BiH border, where an unknown number of Croatian police officers wearing black uniforms with the Croatian flag emblem sewed on were waiting. At this point the officers searched the respondent’s bag and patted down his pockets. All of their money was taken out of bags and removed from their trouser pockets.

The transit group were then forced to undress. Their trousers, shirts, jackets and shoes were laid in a pile and burned by the police officers. Their socks were thrown into the river next to where the van had stopped. The five men were left standing in only their underwear as they watched their personal belongings be destroyed.

Two police officers fired their guns twice into the air and yelled,

***“Go! Go to Bosnia! Go to Bihać.”***

At this point the transit group were forced across the border back to BiH.

**11/09/2019**

**“THE RESPONDENT SAID HE IS 16 YEARS OLD AND POLICE SAID 'NO YOU WERE BORN IN 2001'”**

**Date and time:** September 11, 2019 11:00

**Location:** Velika Kladuša, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.185029446191, 15.800613853794

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 16 - 24 , from: Western Sahara

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 5 male Slovenian authorities in blue uniforms, 1 female Slovenian authority in blue uniform

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of six men in transit from Western Sahara were apprehended at approximately 11.00 in Novo Mesto (Slovenia) on 11th September 2019. The group was traveling on foot when they entered a populated area of the town. The respondent asked a local man to call the police because he planned on asking the police for asylum, assuming he was following the proper procedure for seeking international protection. Six Slovenian police officers, five male authorities and one female authority wearing blue uniforms appeared on site. The group complied with the authorities. The group was taken in a police van and brought to the Novo Mesto police station. They remained at the station for three hours.

At the station the transit group was forced to sign documents without translation. One minor was present (aged 16 years old) and he was given the same documents and procedures as the five adults in the group. The respondent expressed intent for asylum. Referencing the lack of safety in his home country of Western Sahara, the respondent stated:

*"If you focus on our country you will see that there is a lot of conflict."*

The respondent noted the entire groups motive for seeking asylum. In the police station, the respondent spoke in English and attempted to express to the Slovenian authority that they wanted to seek international protection because of the issues they faced. The officers ordering them to sign the paperwork ignored this communication. After three hours in the Novo Mesto police station the group was transported to the border with Croatia.

From the border, Croatian police who had received the transfer of the group, loaded them in a van with no windows and exposed them to extreme heat. The vehicle was driven recklessly and very fast, causing all members of the group to feel sick. The respondent reports that all six vomited inside the van. The vehicle brought them to a station in Croatia. Here the group was detained inside the station for four hours. They were denied water and the only toilet available was inside the detainment cell with no privacy. The cell was fitted with one bed, but contained seven people.

*"It was like a horror movie. I have never seen something like this."*

An unspecified number of Croatian police in blue uniforms, with two police dogs, questioned the group about their ages. The youngest stated his age as 16 years and the authority responded:

*"No you were born in 2001."*

The same male Croatian authority then used his fists and punched the minor in the face several times. The minor was processed like an adult, as was done earlier in the Slovenian station at Novo Mesto. The respondent expressed intent again at the station in Croatia for asylum, but the request was denied.

The group was then transported in a white police van and brought to the border. They were unloaded from the van and pushed back from Croatian territory into Bosnia (close to the town of Velika Kladuša).

11/09/2019

## “RUNNING WAS SCARY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT DIRECTION, ONLY RUNNING.”

**Date and time:** September 11, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Kočevje, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.641359, 14.830741

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 14 person(s), age: 21, 32- 40 , from: Afghanistan, Morocco, Egypt

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 6 Slovenian police officers. 8 Croatian police in light blue uniforms with black ski masks transported the respondents in 2 vans.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Several groups in transit were walking together in the wooded area near Kočevje, Slovenia on 14th September 2019. In total, the combined group included fourteen men (from Morocco, Egypt, and Afghanistan) ranging in age from 21 years old to 32-40 years old.

At approximately 20.00 the group was spotted by Slovenian authorities. Approximately eight Slovenian authorities captured the group of fourteen men. The group was taken in two separate white police vans with no windows. The vans drove them to the local Kočevje police station (SLO).

At the police station the group members were permitted one small bottle of water each. The respondent expressed the intention to seek asylum and then spoke with a translator at the police station. The male translator was not from Morocco and according to the respondent, the translator seemed to not fully understand the respondent, or made out as though he did not.

The respondent tried to speak in English directly to a male Slovenian authority but was told to only speak to the translator. As the respondent spoke with the translator, another Slovenian authority typed the questions and answers on a computer in the detention room. The group was detained at the Kočevje police station from approximately 20.00 on the 14th September until mid afternoon on the 15th of September.

Following detainment at the Kočevje police station (SLO) the group was transported to the Croatian border. There, two white police vans with no windows or seat belts took the fourteen men on into the interior. The temperature was extremely hot inside the van. The male officer driving made many fast turns, often throwing the respondent off the bench in the back of the van. During the six-seven hour trip inside the van the respondent vomited three times. The respondent reports that other members of the group vomited “the whole time.”

The vans arrived at a police station in Croatia. At the police station the group was detained a second time. Respondents arrived before sunset, having left from detention in Slovenia at mid afternoon. At the Croatian police station the respondents were denied water, food, and access to toilets. There was no translator present.

Approximately three hours after it became dark the respondents were taken outside to be transported again. They were driven a short distance to and then unloaded from the vans. Approximately twelve officers dressed in all black and wearing black ski masks were waiting as they exited the vehicles. The officer took all bags as well as clothing from inside the bags and the clothes which the respondents were wearing at the time.

The entire group had their shoes taken and two power banks were also confiscated. A total of 117 euros were taken from the respondent’s bag and pockets. The euros were then put into the pockets of one alleged Croatian authority. Phones were taken by the officers and broken using batons so that the screens were cracked and the back of the phone was no longer attached. All other personal belongings were laid into a pile and set on fire by what was described as Croatian police. The respondent was forced to watch his belongings burn.

The officers, described by the respondent as Croatian police, used their fists to hit the group in their faces. Batons were used to hit their hands, backs, ankles, and feet. When the assaults had finished, the officers ordered them to run. The respondent began running immediately without heeding any specific direction. He only slowed down to a walking pace about 30 minutes after leaving the Croatian authorities, describing how:

“Running (was) scary. I don’t know what direction... only running.”

From their return journey on foot, the respondents suggest they were pushed back approximately one hours walk from Šturlić. The group members were dispersed by the attacks

of the officers and so returned separately. The respondent and two other members of the group continued on foot and walked through the night to Velika Kladuša with no shoes. In the morning a local man offered the three in transit some T-shirts and two old pairs of shoes.

The respondent suffered severe contusion to the upper part of his right hand (as pictured in Figure 1 & 2). The respondent's right wrist was also swollen as a result of the Croatian authorities beating the hands and arms with a baton. A second group member had swelling on the top of his left foot (see Figure 4). In comparison to the right foot, the bones were not visible because of the amount of swelling. According to staff at the Medecine sans Frontier (MSF) field clinic, this injury was a severe sprain. All three of the respondents had also suffered damage (such as missing toe nails) as a result of walking and running for hours with no shoes or socks, which had been confiscated by the police during the pushbacks (see Figure 3).

09/09/2019

**“THIS IS NOT A ROOM IN A HOTEL. [...] NOTHING TO EAT, NOTHING TO DRINK, NO TOILETS. WE WERE SEATING HERE AND TOILETS THERE [POINTING A SPACE ON THE GROUND ONE METER AHEAD]. IN SAME ROOM, ON THE FLOOR.”**

**Date and time:** September 9, 2019 22:00

**Location:** Kobiljac, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.17896984093538, 16.05076841024777

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 20-42 , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** At least 6 Slovenian officers dressed with blue shirts, 1 police car, 1 police van. At least 14 Croatian officers, of whom at least 10 Croatian officers dressed in black and wearing ski-masks. Other officers at police station and in the cars wearing blue police shirts. 1 car from the Croatian police, 1 police van, 1 motorbike

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At approximately midnight on 31st of August 2019, a group of seven people from Morocco left Velika Kladuša to cross the border with Croatia. After eight days walking in the mountainous forest of Croatia, they group finally reach the Slovenian border.

On 8th September, at approximately 23:00, as they walked along a road, two officers, a policeman and a policewoman, arrived in a police car and summoned them, ordering them to stop. The respondent describes how the group were scared, but approached because they wanted to ask for asylum. The transit group obeyed the officers, who promptly made calls to their colleagues on the phone. A police van arrived and took the group to a police station in Metlika (Slovenia), where other police officers took their pictures, their fingerprints, wrote down their names, country of origin/destination and kept them in detention overnight.

A paper written in Slovenian was issued to the group members, but the men did not understand what it said. Another respondent, part of the same group, reacted to this issuing of documents, stating:

***“No understand. Police, this, me sign but no understand.”***

Without any translator present, the police forced the group to sign a paper (to which none of the men were made aware of the contents).

Describing the procedure of this identification process, fingerprinting and issuing of removal form, the respondent shared that:

*“They talk a bit English but if you understand, okay. If not, they do whatever they want”.*

The respondent stated that, the day after (9th September 2019), the Slovenian officers removed the group from the station and drove them to the border with Croatia. A van, with a description matching that of Croatian police vehicles, took the seven people from the border, and drove them into Croatian territory. The respondent described how exasperated he was to be returned by Slovenian officials to Croatia. He stated that he used to live and work in Italy before and, expressing himself in fluent Italian, shared the despair that:

*“I thought they would take us to a camp. But no. They took us to the Croatian border. There were two officers to drive [the van] and four in another car. They took us to a police station”.*

Referring to the Croatian officials above, the respondent was taken to a police station along with the other group members. Once there, some Croatian officers took their picture, wrote down their names and put them in detention. When asked if they had access to toilets, the respondent answered:

*“Toilets? This is not a room in a hotel. No toilets. Nothing to eat, nothing to drink, no toilets. We were seating here and toilets there [pointing a space on the ground one meter ahead]. In same room, on the floor”.*

During the evening (of 9th September 2019), having been detained for what the respondent suggests was approximately four-five hours, the transit group were taken en masse to a place at the border between Croatia and Bosnia. The group estimated that they had arrived to this location at 22:00.

The respondent shares how, upon arrival at the border, the police removed them from the vans and lined the people up in order to confiscate all their belongings.

*“They make us go out of the van, in line. There are two officers on each side. They are dressed in black with [ski masks] on their face. They take our personal belongings. They take our phones and they break all. After they give us the plastic bag with the broken phones.”*

After the group had been lined up, the police broke their mobile phones, as pictured above. According to the respondent, making any movement or complaint in the presence of these officers would lead them to beating people.

*“If you make a gesture or a step on the side, they beat you.”*

Once the group had been searched, the officers shouted at them to move towards BiH territory. But concealed in the woodland were more Croatian officers, ready to assault the group.

*“They say ‘go go go’ and you have to run. We run straight and there, there are four other [officers] hidden behind a tree and they come out with batons and beat us, all together. One had [come by] motorbike”.*

The group were ambushed by four officers concealed behind a tree. Emerging from cover, they attacked the men, beating them with batons.

Figure 3 depicts the actions that unfolded. The attack resulted in the respondent being beaten to the ground by one of the Croatian officers. He stated:

*"I was on the ground and one [officer] beat me very strongly with a baton on my back when I was lying down."*

After being beaten, one of the officers ordered them to walk in the direction of Bosnia. The men began walking in the direction given. It was a sloped route, surrounded by trees. The respondent described how one of the officers who had ambushed them from the tree used a gun to frighten the group.

*"We had to go down the mountain, after the tree. One of the four officers behind the tree had a gun. You know a gun that only makes noise, to frighten you. He shot four times. One in the air, up, and three times on us."*

The group didn't know where they had been pushed back as they had no phones (and thus no GPS), and they were also in a state of shock which heightened their disorientation. They asked for directions in the first village they came to and were told the direction of Velika Kladuša. According to the person who helped them, it was around 30 km away.

Confirmation from several group members suggests the border violence occurred at Kobiljak (HR). One of the respondents within the group remembered clearly the separation of the two roads, one going to Croatia, one to Bosnia, and other details of the surroundings that made him able to show the exact place of the push back on the map. The description corresponds to the location indicated.

**27/08/2019**

**"UP TO THREE HOURS MY EYES WAS BURNING, FIRE... WE CANNOT SEE PROPERLY FOR THREE HOURS."**

**Date and time:** August 27, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Near Lohovo, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 44.7275608, 15.9184948

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 11 person(s), age: 14-40 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, pepper spray, gunshots, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian army officers, 3 Slovenian Police officers, unknown number of Croatian regular police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information 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

A group of 13 men and minors, all from Pakistan and Afghanistan, were apprehended at 21:21 on August 25<sup>th</sup> 2019 in the forest near a small road about two to three kilometers from the Italian border with Slovenia. The respondent, a 28-year-old Pakistani man, shared that prior to spotting the Slovenian police officers, his group thought that they were about to cross into Italy and were feeling happy. However, at this point the group saw three Slovenian police officers wearing light blue shirts with dark blue collars: one woman police officer and two men.

The police officers told the group to stop and one police officer shot a bullet into the air.

*“Some guys try to run. And they spray tear spray.”*

According to the respondent, the police officers used tear gas on the group. Two men managed to run away. Because the respondent was near the front of the group, he was sprayed heavily.

*“We cannot see anything. I cover my eyes with my hands. Too much fire in my eyes. Up to three hours my eyes was burning, fire...We cannot see properly for three hours.”*

The police officers told the group to sit down. The group sat and asked for water because of the effects of the tear gas. The female police officer gave the group water. The police then began interrogating them, asking; how many people were in the group? Although the group was originally 13, the group said they are only 11 so that the police would not chase the two who had managed to avoid arrest.

Two Slovenian officers, whom the respondent described as “army”, arrived a little later at the spot of apprehension. The respondent did not know if they were working independently or had coordinated their actions with the Slovenian police officers. One army officer had a gun and one did not. The one without a gun spoke Italian and asked if anyone in the group spoke Italian. Since it was dark, the respondent could not clearly make out more information about their uniforms.

The police officers told the respondent:

*“‘You are boss, you lead.’ They use bad words for me.”*

They assumed the respondent was a guide and verbally harassed him. A police car arrived later. The police put 11 people in one small car.

*“It was car for 6 people and they took us, 11.”*

The police drove the group for around 45 minutes until they reached a Slovenian police station.

*"Too much hot. One [man] was start crying in car and he knock on window to stop and some time he feel badly, he sick, when he go police station, he fell down. I call police. He don't eat for some days and was hot in car."*

The police officers called a doctor at the police station who then gave the man an injection. The injection, however, did not appear to help the man and he didnt feel better. At the police station, the police officers took the men's fingerprints. They told the respondent that he had come too many times to this exact police station and was processed at it many times. The respondent said:

*"I say 'yes, I come many times.' I say 'we want asylum, we want stay here.' They say 'no asylum here.'"*

The police kept the group in a container for what the respondent felt was 24 hours. The police gave the men biscuits, water and jam and/or chocolate the first night. The police gave the men sheets of paper in Slovenian. There were no translators present. The men signed these sheets. They were not beaten at this police station but they were pushed and verbally harassed.

The following day, the police gave the group macaroni and chicken to eat. Around 15:00 on the 26<sup>th</sup>, August 2019, the police officers put the group into a minibus and drove them to the Rupa border crossing (between Slovenia and Croatia). This drive took approximately two to two and a half hours. A little after 17:00, the group arrived at the Rupa border crossing. The Slovenian police gave the group their belongings back. However, when they were transferred to the Croatian police, the Croatian police took all their belongings once again:

*"When they give [us] to Croatian police, they took us everything, our phones. They didn't even leave our shoes on our feet."*

The sheets of paper the group signed in Slovenia were given to the Croatian police, who then threw them in the garbage. The group stayed at the Rupa border crossing police station for three and a half hours. They were not beaten at the police station. They were not given food or water and were kept in a container. The respondent states that the police officers became very angry after he asked for asylum.

*"They were very angry at us. They didn't speak to us properly. When we ask for water, 'sir, we want water', he act like he not listening. When you ask for toilet, he act like he not listening."*

At the police station, the respondent was made to fill out a sheet with his name and personal information. The police officers photographed him with this sheet. They did not take his fingerprints. After taking these pictures, the police took the group to a van. "After picture, go

van." The police officers made the group take off their shoes and stored all of their shoes inside the seats in the police van.

*"You will not wear your shoes when you go in van. They put all shoes inside seat."*

They were driven in the van for more than four and a half hours.

*"Drive like crazy van. When you punish someone, put them in a box and make like this [respondent mimes like he is violently shaking a box]."*

On the 27th August, at approximately midnight, the van arrived near Lohovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the border were two cars of Croatian police officers wearing light blue shirts. The respondent remembers seeing a police officer with a badge that had one single yellow star. The police opened the van and made the men come out one-by-one.

*"[Police] hit with one stick [baton], everyone, one-by-one. He hit and say 'go there.'"*

The police officers put the men into one line and created a fire.

*"They put everything, bags, clothing, sleeping bag, everything, your phone, your shoes, even your socks, they put everything fire."*

After burning the group's belongings, the police again arranged the men into a line and beat them again, this time with wooden sticks taken from surrounding trees. They told the group to go across the border. The men were still without shoes and the respondent describes that the ground contained many sharp rocks.

*"When you go this way, you feel it cut your feet. They say 'go, go, fast.' And they beat everyone, they go crazy, one guy they hit on head and he bleed."*

At this point, the respondent described how chaos ensued. The police officers began beating the men "like crazy" while one police officer held a flashlight. Everyone began running and some people in the group fell down in the forest, receiving injuries from their falls. One man fell on his nose and injured it so that it began bleeding.

When the men crossed the border, they began to walk back to Bihać. Some men did not have trousers, only a shirt and underwear. Everyone in the group was without shoes and socks. The police had taken everything.

*"Nothing we have."*

The respondent states that he did not get “bubbles” (blisters) and wounds in his feet from ten days of walking in the Croatian and Slovenian forest, but from the few hours forced to walk barefoot during the pushback, he had gained these injuries. Summing up his experience, the respondent stated:

“When they push us back, they make like our heart is broke.”

24/08/2019

## “OUR POLITICS DON’T WANT YOU TO STAY IN SLOVENIA. ”

**Date and time:** August 24, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Mrazovac, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.0961, 16.124577

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 42 person(s), age: 16 - 23 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting

**Police involved:** Slovenian policeman wearing plain clothes, Croatian police officers with van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group left from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and crossed Croatia, travelling on into Slovenia undetected. The group were travelling by car near Krnica (Slovenia) when they were stopped by people dressed in plain clothes, but described as identifying themselves as Slovenian police. The officers asked the driver of the vehicle which the transit group were in to park beside the road.

The officers then made the group exit the vehicle one-by-one, and called another police team for reinforcement. Finally the group were all taken to police vans, and loaded into them. After driving to a police station, an officer opened the door and asked them where they came from. Everyone answered verbally. Then the officer asked who could speak English. The interviewee said that he could. Then the officer asked who in the transit group was a minor.

The officer made the minors get out of the vehicle, twelve in total. This did not include the respondent who was an adult. The police officer instructed him that he would translate for the group. Then the remaining group of adults left in the van were transported to another police station.

At the station the respondent was interviewed by police. The interrogator wanted to know his identity, but also to know who was the smuggler of the group. He gave his index fingerprint and had his photograph taken in two different rooms. The respondent had to sign approximately ten documents. When he signed the documents, he believed that he would be brought to a registration centre and was positive about this prospect.

*"I was sitting and he said "What's your name?" I said, "My name is Hussein," so okay "where are you from?", "I am from Pakistan", okay so then, "how did you enter Slovenia?" Same condition. And then I give finger and then another policeman took me in another room and I give my finger again. And I am thinking, this time I am seeing a good dream, now I am staying in Slovenia but no, he deport me. Picture from camera of the computer 2 times."*

The respondent was taken back to the first interview room and instructed to make the translation for the minors who had been previously been separated from the adults. The respondent performed these translations of the formal interview process. One of the people separated as a minor entered, but the police officers did not believe this was the case. The respondent began to translate directly what this group member said, but the police became immediately angry at the respondent.

*'So one boy is not minor but even he told me, "I'm minor", so I am just translating. So that policeman said "fuck you! why are you translating? You look this guy, he is not minor, so why?" I said, "I am just translating, I am not responsible for this, he is telling just telling to me, I just explain."*

The respondent stated that when he explained this to the officer, the officer stood up, approached the respondent, and kicked him two times on his ribs while he was sitting on the chair. The interviewee fell down from the impact and shock. Immediately after this attack, another officer came into the room and asked the officer beating the respondent to stop. The officers spoke in Slovenian and the respondent could not understand the argument that followed between the two men.

With the exception of this person who was identified as an adult, the respondent shared that he did not understand why the other members of the group were not taken to a registration centre in Slovenia for unaccompanied minors. According to the interviewee, the officers doing the interview always wrote the wrong birth date, marking the group members as overage on the administrative documents.

*"They deport, they don't listen, even he just want to intimidate me, okay you are right his [man identified as adult] age [is overage], but it was one boy. One small boy same but even the policeman write, his age as 2000/1998/2001, but no-one accept this guy. They don't want to give stay [paper]. Everyone, same age, he don't want, he say our politics don't want to you stay in Slovenia."*

The respondent was taken with the other group members to a room. He described this as a jail. They were detained together in this room overnight. In the morning a police officer told them that they had to go.

*'He said, "Go back Bosnia, you are Muslim and you need to stay over there! I am not the responsible of this! I think this is the matter why he don't come we come in Slovenia, in Croatia. I think this is what they want that we go back Bosnia, because Bosnia is a Muslim country, I think this is a factor"*

The group were transferred by Slovenian police to the Croatian border, and from there Croatian police drove the group to the border with BiH. The respondent does not recall the exact location of the pushback, only that the drive through Croatia was long, suffered by the group in cramped and hot conditions.

**10/08/2019**

## **"WE FORGOT OUR BODIES."**

**Date and time:** August 10, 2019 14:00

**Location:** near Poljana, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.210479, 15.929315

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: 24-26 , from: Pakistan, Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

A group of twelve Algerian men, all between 24-26 years old, left from Sturlic (BiH) for their attempt to cross the Croatian-Bosnian border on August 1st around 5.30 AM.

They were walking for 9 days through forests and mountains in Croatian inner land, avoiding bigger streets. It was very hot in this period and they were running out of water and food soon, drinking rain water and sharing few cans of meat.

*"Just in the jungle – all the time – because people [in Croatia] can see you. And always they have come, when they come and see you, the police will come in the next station. They [the police officers] don't come directly to you, they will wait for you at the next station."*

*"There was nothing – we forgot our bodies. Difficult travel. You want to drink but you can't drink. You want to sleep but you can not sleep."*

On August 10, they crossed the river Kolpa at the Croatian-Slovenian border and soon after they arrived in Slovenia, the group split: Seven of them continued their way towards Trieste (IT) while five people aimed to reach Ljubljana (SLO) and continued more eastwards. The group of five was then apprehended little by little by Slovenian police: Two members of the group split from the other to continue their journey by bus and were caught at the bus station in Kočevje (SLO, coordinates: 45.647027, 14.856218) in the morning by local police while trying to catch the bus towards Ljubljana.

*"They were not lucky: At 7:10 in the morning [of August 9], they were caught by police, just four minutes before the bus leaves to Ljubljana."*

Three individuals of the group continued, the respondent walked around 20 meters in front of his two friends as a vanguard. However, when local police arrived around 5.30 AM, they didn't see the respondent but only apprehended the two other group members in Breg pri Kočevju (estimated coordinates: 45.656917, 14.838278).

The respondent then continued alone and took rest in an abandoned house from 6.30 AM to 2.15 PM on August 9 before continuing his journey towards Ljubljana in the evening. On his way, he found an old bike.

*"Actually it was a completely useless bike, but I used it! You know, it was big hope, when I found it, I was so tired, I thought it is the biggest gift of my life! It was very much broken, but I went out to use that bike."*

He drove the bike for nine or eleven kilometres, but as he was driving on a big street instead of using the bicycle path, he attracted the attention of a local police officer who stopped him in Goriča vas (SLO).

The officer is described as tall, with green eyes and XX uniform, and the respondent claims that all five individuals were sure that it was the same person involved in the apprehension of all of them.

*"He [local police officer] was using a bike too, he makes a sign with light, twice and he talked in Slovenian but I didn't understand. He said, come on the road is not here, the road is there. I followed the road and he just know that I am immigrant cause my clothes. Maybe one minute and the police came, and I started to explain to him what happened me. I was without shoes. [...] I am looking for a work, I am student, I am just 26 years – he said okay I will help you. I told him, do you promise me? He said, I will promise. So, I just stopped and that was it."*

The officer promised to the respondent that he would do everything to bring him to the camp in Ljubljana to get registered, so the respondent stopped and waited with the officer. After a few minutes, a white Mercedes Sprinter police van "with blue and yellow lines" arrived and a man and a woman got off the car. They asked the respondent casually about his nationality, country of destination and when the respondent answered that he wants to apply for asylum in Slovenia, they talked for a while amongst the three of them in Slovenian before telling him: "Go with us to the police station of Kočevje. We will see if we bring you to camp or not."

They brought him to the police station in Kočevje (SVN) in the evening of August 9 where the respondent was reunified with his four friends who had been apprehended previously.

*"I was the last one, my friends were all in the detention cell and said: '[Name of the respondent] is going to Ljubljana, he will make it!'; but then I joined them in the cell later."*

In this police station, all men were interrogated one by one, had to give their photos and fingerprints and had to sign papers without being provided a translation. Their phones and power banks were confiscated. No translator was present during the whole process.

*"I was trying to explain them in English, in German, in French, just try to help me – sometimes they understood me, sometimes not. Their English was bad, when I wanted to talk about something, I had to use mimic – if I talk about please give me water, I had to make a gesture of a cup to drink. It was not easy to make them understand. They asked many questions but didn't understand my answers."*

However, the respondent repeated several times to the officers that he lost two phones in Croatia and doesn't want to be brought to Croatia in the evening as he is convinced that, while being pushed back at night, it is more likely to be exposed to violence. According to the respondent, the Slovenian officers understood his point, felt pity for him and therefore decided to let the group spend the night in the police station and bring them to Croatia in the morning.

The group spent the night on the floor, being provided two or three blankets for all of them. The four friends were not provided any food, only the respondent was given a little bit of bread and chocolate.

In the morning of August 10, the group was brought to one of the last villages on the Slovene side before the border, where they and their belongings were handed over to the Croatian authorities. They drove for two or three hours in a windowless prisoner van.

*"I slept maybe twice, maybe three times and when I wake up and asked where we are: who knows – no one knows."*

At one point, the car stopped at a police station, they were waiting for 30 minutes in the heat inside of the car. One police officer opened the door and asked the group if they needed water or food, and as they confirmed he brought them both. After that, two men from Syria and two from Pakistan were put into the van and they continued their ride.

Soon after that, around 2:00 PM on August 10, the van arrived at the Croatian-Bosnian border.

*"In the border, the police open the door and said one come – we thought oh no, one by one – please not at this time [remark of the reporter: reference to the common 'tunnel trick' where the individuals have to pass one by one through groups of police officers standing on both sides while beating them]."*

The respondent described that at this point, there was one more prisoner van present with around 13 people in the back who the respondents estimates to be originally from Pakistan.

*"A guy from Syria went out and they gave him all stuff, all phone, power bank, charger – and he told him, go away, go away. [...] [A]fter that we all followed him – it was not easy to get your phone, maybe some take it – 15 guys from Pakistan and two Syrian – we were just 5 but it was our stuff."*

The Croatian officers remained at their side of the border, behind the border stone. The respondent was not able to identify the place of pushback as his phone was running out of battery, but the group walked around 13 or 14 kilometers westwards back to Velika Kladusa, so he estimates that the pushback took place near Poljana (BiH).

**05/08/2019**

## **“THIS TIME WE WERE LUCKY THAT THE POLICE DIDN’T FORCE US TO UNDRESS BECAUSE IT WAS RAINING”**

**Date and time:** August 5, 2019 21:00

**Location:** Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.8970349, 15.660114300000032

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 20-23 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** kicking, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 Slovenian police officers, 1 van, undisclosed number of Croatian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, confiscation of property

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

A group of three Algerian men aged between 20-23, began their journey from Šid (Serbia), passing through Croatia and on into Slovenia. The transit group were apprehended at 21:00 August 5th 2019 by the Slovenian police in Dobova (Slovenia). When the group was apprehended, they announced to the police officers that they wanted to request asylum, but the Slovenian police ignored the request and responded by kicking one of the young men. In addition to the attack, the police officers also started to take photos of the transit group. The respondent described, in relation to previous capture by the authorities, that:

*“This time we were ‘lucky’ that the police didn’t force us to undress because it was raining”.*

The three Algerians were told that they were going to be deported into Bosnia but the young men convinced the Slovenian officers to reconsider and deport them back to Serbia where they originally came

from. The Slovenian police officers transferred the three young men from Dobova to a police station in Zagreb, Croatia. The respondent said that they were transferred to Croatia in a big police vehicle and estimated that there were six police officers involved in their arrest and the transfer to Croatia.

After an estimated one hour of travelling, they reached the Croatian police station in Zagreb at 22:30. In the police station, the officers asked the Algerians several questions regarding their origin and took their details.

*“The police asked us where we are from .. and told us not to speak with them... And told us not to try to cross the border”.*

At the police station in Zagreb, they were detained for over 24 hours and kept in a small room without any furniture. During their detention, they were withheld access to food, water and sanitary facilities. The respondent told us that the police said:

*“If you want food then go back to Serbia. Why do you come here ...?”.*

Whilst at the police station the three men asked and were denied asylum and had their personal property (including money and mobile phones) taken from them.

The transit group were detained until early morning on Tuesday 7th August at which point the Croatian police brought the three men across Croatia and left them across the Serbian border near to Sid (Serbia) at 04:00.

**28/07/2019**

## **“THE POLICE TOLD HIM THAT THEY DO NOT BELIEVE HIM AND BEAT HIM”**

**Date and time:** July 28, 2019 21:00

**Location:** border of Croatia/BiH, 0.5km north of Tržačka Raštela

**Coordinates:** 44.978306, 15.782222

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 14, 21, 28, 19, 22, 18, 32 from Afghanistan; 32 from Pakistan; rest unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 regular Croatian officers, 10 Croatian Interventna officers +van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of nine adult males and minors – 8 from Afghanistan, aged 21, 14, 28, 19, 22, 18, with two of unknown ages, and one man from Pakistan aged 32 – were apprehended along a road in Slovenia approximately 6km from the Slovenian-Italian border at approximately 01:00 by eight Slovenian police officers wearing black trousers and dark blue t-shirts. The interviewee – a 21 year old man from Afghanistan – does not recall the precise date his group was apprehended or the date of the pushback from Slovenia to Croatia because, as his testimony relates, he was incredibly disoriented after days of walking in the forest. For this reason, this report will describe both pushbacks – from Slovenia to Croatia and from Croatia to Bosnia – but the summary above describes the Croatian pushback, as the interviewee was able to provide more specific information about this pushback.

As mentioned, the group were first apprehended in the middle of the night in Slovenia by eight officers. In the group of police officers who attended on the scene, there was one female police officer who asked questions of the group, such as; why they have come into Slovenia? where they are going? The Slovenian police then took their belongings: trousers, shirts, clothes, phones, money, but they did not take their backpacks. They spent about 20 minutes with the police along the road then were driven to the police station, where they spent a short amount of time. At the police station, they were given small amounts of bread and water but they stated it was not enough for them, especially after travelling so long from Bosnia.

At the police station, the respondent made a verbal request for asylum. The police told him that he cannot stay. The police gave him a sheet of paper for him to fill out with his information; this piece of paper was translated into Pashto so the respondent was able to read it and understand it. Then the police handed him a sheet of paper in Slovenian that was not translated. The police told him to sign the piece of paper which they stated is important for any asylum request. However, the respondent did not believe the police and believed the officers want him to sign a piece of paper that actually expressed desire to leave Slovenia.

The respondent declined to sign the piece of paper but was then beaten by a Slovenian police officer. The police beat him until he signed this piece of paper. The respondent states that the Slovenian police later handed this piece of paper to the Croatian police. After a short amount of time in the police station, the police drove the group to the Croatian-Slovenian border, which was about one hour's drive from the police station. The drive to the border was described as awful: the group of nine was put in one van that had "no oxygen" and some people vomitted and fainted. They were handed to the Croatian police, the same day as they were found on Slovenian territory. There were around five male Croatian police officers wearing dark blue t-shirts and black pants, and one female Croatian police officer wearing the same uniform.

Once the group was handed over to the Croatian police at what the respondent described as the "official immigration" place at the border, the Croatian police beat the group. When the 14 year-old minor in the group showed the police a piece of paper from the camp he is registered

in in Bosnia that shows his age and that he is a minor, the police told him that they do not believe him and beat him.

The Croatian police then put the group into a police van and drove for what the respondent said felt like 09:00 to 21:00. The police drove through the “jungle” in a way meant to purposefully disorient the men, according to the interviewee. They drove around the same locations multiple times and drove through the forest.

The group was pushed back into Bosnia the day of July 28th at approximately 21:00 at night. At the border, there were three regular Croatian police officers, wearing dark blue t-shirts and black trousers, and ten police officers clad in all black, whose uniforms matched the *Interventna* units. The respondent describes these officers as big and muscular and that they wore black face masks. The respondent states that he has been pushed back so much that he sometimes recognizes the same police officers at the border near Velika Kladuša, but this time he did not recognize the police officers.

**26/07/2019**

## **“WE ASKED THE SLOVENIAN POLICE OFFICERS FOR ASYL BUT THEY JUST LIED TO US”**

**Date and time:** July 26, 2019 20:00

**Location:** Between Staro Selo Topusko (HR) and Poljana (BiH)

**Coordinates:** 45.21223880054626, 15.928689968540539

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 7, 27, 30, and 33 years old , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The family of four left from Šturlić (BiH) to Croatia on the 13th of July, 2019. In total, the group consisted of a couple with a girl (around 5) and the brother of the woman. They were all originally from Iran.

The group walked on their own, however during their time in the Croatian interior they saw several other groups in the Croatian forests. After ten days they crossed the river Kulpa on the Croatian/Slovenian border and continued on into Slovenia. They crossed it over a bridge during the night at which point the weather was rainy and foggy.

They walked for two more days for approximately seven kilometers in Slovenia at which point they ran out of food. At this point, the female group-member exited the forest to search for a local person to ask for food from. The individuals she came across gave her food however the respondent inferred that they also informed the police of their presence. One hour later, around noon on the 25th of July, the police approached the group and stopped them. The officers were described as a male and female, managing two police dogs. The respondent described the officers as "regular police" however the respondent inferred that one of them perhaps belonged to a different division because their uniform was slightly different and more black.

Upon their arrival, the officers told the group: "Sit down, don't move. Do you have money or phone, knife, weapons or drugs in your bag?" They then began to search the group. During the process, the little girl of the family began crying. The officers then proceeded to confiscate their phones and money. Around this time, the adult group-members expressed their intention to claim asylum in Slovenia to which the female police officers communicated to the group that they would be able to seek asylum in Slovenia. After a while a car came and took them to a police station, likely in Črnomelj. The ride was about 30 minutes long.

In the station, the officers took the print of one finger of each group-member, including the child, and also took pictures of each group-member and forced them to sign a document according to which they had to pay a fine of 460 Euro. The papers that the group were made to sign were in Farsi and English.

There was also an Afghan-Slovenian translator present at the station who translated what the officers said from Slovenian to Farsi. The respondents mentioned that they had previously known the reputation of this translator. They mentioned that he is often present when Persian-speaking people in transit (from Iran and Afghanistan) are taken to Slovenian police stations. The translator was described at around 45 years old, with a shaved face, a slim physique, tanned skin and short, black hair. The respondents had the feeling that he was not translating correct or left out some parts of their responses to the police officers. They had the impression that he, for example, did not translate to the officers that the woman is pregnant.

The group reiterated their intention to claim asylum at this point:

*"We asked the Slovenian police officers for asyl but they just lied to us. They said if you want asyl you must go to the capital, to Ljubljana not at the border. You can't stay here you must come back to Bosna."*

The group then spent one night in a prison-like building near the police station. The single man of the group (brother of the sister) was brought into a room with other single men, mostly from Pakistan. The family had a room for itself. The room had a toilet and beds and in the night they were given food: Bread, some cold meat and water.

At around 7:00 am on the 26th July all people, approximately 15 in total, were brought to vans. The single men were put into one van, the family into another. The van was driven very fast and reckless. Many became car sick. At the Croatian border, the groups were handed over to the Croatian police. The Slovenian police papers that they were forced to sign the previous day were withheld from them. At the Croatian border station, the Croatian police took the pictures, names and personal details of the groups and they all had to sign some papers. Afterwards they were brought to the police station of Delnice (HR). Where they had to wait inside of the van for 90 minutes.

*"We told them that we are hungry, but they didn't give us anything."*

Afterwards they were brought another location — a police station in Karlovac (HR). There, they had to wait another hour in the van. The respondents inferred that this may have been due to the presence of heavy rain at this point. Then, the van left for the Bosnian border. This ride took approximately one hour, during which the family was still with the group of single Pakistani men.

The group of four was pushed back on July 26th at around 8:00 pm close to Poljana (BiH) [coordinates: 45.21235, 15.92908] At the border, the Croatian police officers opened the door and told them to get out. They returned to the family their phones and their money before telling them to walk past a large cement border stone marking the border of Croatia, they then followed this path down through a forest area, passing another identical cement border stone marking the border of Bosnia. The group of Pakistani men was pushed back in the minutes following the family's departure.

*After 20 minutes on the road into Bosnia they met a journalist from Swiss TV and talked to her. She spoke with the group briefly and made several images of the group which are included below*

**25/07/2019**

## **"ONE OF THE POLICE OFFICERS WAS FACETIMING A WOMAN AND SMILING "**

**Date and time:** July 25, 2019 20:00

**Location:** Between Dvor (HR) and Stabandža (BiH)

**Coordinates:** 45.140827387762876, 16.074544999999944

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 16 - 33 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, theft of personal belongings

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the 14th of July, a group of thirteen Algerian men, both Arab and Berbers, set out from the forested areas surrounding Sturlic (BiH) with the intention of crossing through Croatia into Slovenia. Although the group of thirteen left together, only six of these men would later be

pushed back. Over the course of nine days, the men walked through the interior of Croatia before crossing into Slovenia, where they continued for another one and a half days.

On the afternoon of July 24th, the group described walking along a section of train tracks in Slovenia, approximately 30 km away from the Croatian border, and approximately 20 km away from the Italian border.

Around this time, the respondents described a civilian in a car coming across the group as they walked along the train track. The respondents described this individual as staring at them as they travelled, then disappearing, and returning several minutes later. The group inferred that this individual had alerted the authorities of their presence because shortly after this, at around 5:00 pm, they described hearing, and then later seeing, several small drones flying above their heads.

During the following confusion, at which time the group began to hear authorities approaching, the group decided to attempt to run away however these plans were interrupted by the arrival of police. In total, the respondents described six members of their group being encircled, a short distance away from the nearby train-tracks in a lightly forested area, by more than fifteen Slovenian authorities, accompanied by three vehicles and three police dogs. The police dogs were described as a German shepherd, a rottweiler, and a pitbull. The dogs had no muzzles over their faces, however the respondents described that their handlers, which had the dogs on leashes, carried the muzzles in their hands.

The respondents described the majority of the police officers present during this procedure wore uniforms consistent with those typically worn by "regular" Slovenian police officers – mixed light and dark blue collared shirts. These officers were described as having between two and three stars emblazoned on their shoulders. In addition, they described encountering three "special police" officers during this time, which they described as wearing dark blue uniforms and being in charge of handling the three dogs.

The group described being encircled by the police officers and at one point, the men described one of the officers throwing a smoke grenade towards them which let out a chemical which they inferred to be tear gas. One of the respondents recalled that after the tear gas was thrown at the group and they were apprehended, his eyes were red and swollen from the chemicals. Speaking to him, one of the police officers told him to use water to wash out his eyes. As he soon found out, water amplifies the effect of tear gas. The respondent later inferred that the officer intentionally told him to use water to wash out his eyes in order to embarrass and further discomfort him.

Before they left the location, the entire group had their bodies and belongings searched by the Slovenian police. One of the respondents recalled that during this time, one of the police officers struck his fellow group-member:

*"They searched him, they looked through his jacket, and when they found a lighter in his pocket they hit him."*

When asked why this triggered such a response from the police, the respondent recalled that the officers were laughing as they did this. All of the men were handcuffed, some with metal handcuffs and others with plastic zip ties. They were made to walk around 300 meters down a small hill where they waited for around an hour as the officers continued to look for the five other group-members who escaped capture by the officers.

Later, they were made to walk again down a small road until they reached a van which was waiting for them. The van drove quite fast away from this location, in disordered directions and varying speeds, leading to a number of the men being thrown around the van and to feel carsick. The group then described being taken to the nearby police station in Ilirska Bistrica, which the respondents described as a police station that was “special for migrants”. This drive took approximately 45 minutes [45.572815, 14.236834].

In this police station, the group-members expressed their intention to apply for asylum to the police officers present and were denied. The officers at the station took all of the men's fingerprints, photographed them individually, and took down their personal information. One of the group-members described his correct birthdate to the officer writing down his information as 2003 (i.e. 16 years old) however he witnessed the officer wrote in the year 2000 (i.e. 19 years old) on his information form. The men were also given six papers, one of which was written in Slovenian, which they were made to sign. One of the papers was in Arabic, the only paper which they could read and understand, but the officers quickly took this away from them so they could not read it and asked them to sign the rest. The respondents believed this to be a paper which described to them their rights. There was no translator present at this location. They were also given bracelet tags with a number on it at the police station.

The group spent the night in this police station and the next morning, July 25th, were transported to the Croatian border with Slovenia where they were handed over into the custody of Croatian authorities. On the way over, there was one man described wearing a Slovenian military uniform in Slovenia, glaring at the men and slamming the door of the car aggressively. When handed over to the Croatian authorities, they were asked for the papers which they had previously signed in Slovenia and confiscated them. At the border they took everything that they had – their phones, their bags, their powerbanks, and their money. This officer was described as a heavysset male, around 50 years old, with blonde hair, white skin, and chinstrap facial hair. They were then left in a van for sometime between three and four hours waiting in the heat. The Croatian officer did not open the door or give them water during this time.

Eventually, the group described leaving the van and being taken inside of the Croatian border station. They were put in a small room where there were between 30 and 40 other people on the move already waiting. They were mainly from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey. An officer brought in bread and cans of tuna which he threw at the group. This officer was described as insulting the group by equating them to terrorists – showing the group pictures of known terrorists and Yasser Arafat and telling the group that they were like these figures. One of the police officers was FaceTiming a woman and smiling and laughing and filming them.

They stayed two more hours in the Croatian border station with the other people on the move. They left all together. They did not know the exact time, since their phones had been taken, but they inferred that it was around lunchtime since they observed officers sitting down to eat a meal. The van was quite small for the amount of people who needed to fit inside of it. There were more than 20 inside the van. There were two parallel benches in the back which some of the men sat on however the rest needed to squeeze in the middle on the floor. After driving around one hour the van stopped again and the people on the move in the van were divided into three different groups and put into separate vans.

Once leaving the final police station in Croatia, the group described being brought back to an obscure and remote section of the Bosnian-Croatian border between Dvor (HR) and Stabandža (BiH) [45.141902, 16.074545]. This location is more than 30 km away from Velika Kladuša. At this

location, there were around six or seven police officers present, some of who were described as wearing light blue uniforms and others described as wearing dark blue uniforms.

The officers told the group to all exit the van at the same time. With the presence of several dogs and bright lights from the officers' flashlights and van, which blinded the men, they were told to cross back into Bosnia. The dogs were positioned to their left side when exiting the van. The group-members described tripping over several long pieces of wood on the path into Bosnia.

The group described experiencing violence during their push-backs with the officers, manifested through several police officers kicking the group-members as they walked back. The officers in the light blue uniforms were described as those who harassed and attacked the group. The group did not return with their phones, bags, or much of their other belongings which they had taken with them.

The group described the Croatian police officers entering into Bosnian territory approximately 30 meters. The men described there being a concrete border stone which they were made to climb over. Once in Bosnia, they did not know where they were and walked through a forested area before coming across a lightly used trail for tractors after around 1 km. Eventually they came across a single house where they talked briefly to a local Bosnian man who orientated where they were. They then walked down a sandy path where there was an intersection that could either take them to Bihać or Velika Kladuša. The described understanding that it was 35 km in either direction to the cities.

They had been walking for around 3 hours before coming across two international volunteers outside of the small village of Zborište (BiH). Walking several hours after this, They found an abandoned building which they slept in for 3 or 4 hours. It was 25 km from this place to Velika Kladuša

**23/07/2019**

## **“WELCOME TO SERBIA”**

**Date and time:** July 23, 2019 22:00

**Location:** Train station in Frankovci, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 46.394815, 16.194735

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 24, 26 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 11 Slovenian Police Officers, 1 Slovenian Officer in Military Uniform, 10 Croatian Police Officers (4 Border, 5 Regular, 1 Plain clothes)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of two persons in transit had been travelling for many days on foot when they were eventually apprehended by Slovenian police on 23rd July 2019 in the village of Frankovci, Slovenia. The two young men, from Algeria and Morocco, were stopped by two Slovenian police officers at approximately 23:30 in the evening as they walked on a darkened road by the train station in the village of Frankovci (46.394815, 16.194735; see map below).

Two male officers approached them asking them to stop, and were quickly joined by a further two male police officers and one female dressed in what the respondent described as camouflage or military uniform. The police were present on the scene with two official marked vehicles, a Dacia Duster and Renault Traffic. The four male officers and accompanying female, described by the respondent as possibly from the military, detained the transit group on the spot, at which point the two group members each made a verbal request for asylum in Slovenia.

The police officers replied, telling the group members that they shouldn't be concerned and that they would be taken to Ljubljana to make their asylum application. Two officers escorted them to the Renault Traffic and loaded them into the rear area. They were driven for approximately 15 minutes, at which point the vehicle stopped and transit group were brought out at coordinates 46.409638, 16.149378, location of Ormož police station (see Figure 1).

The respondent describes how the Slovenian police officers who had been present at the site of apprehension immediately changed their narrative once in the station. Having previously stated that they intended to transport the transit group to the capital Ljubljana, the police officers quickly reverted to racist verbal abuse and told the two men in transit that they could not claim asylum.

*"[the police told them] 'don't worry I will give you in Ljubljana'... in the police station change... 'go fuck off to Morocco... go fuck yourself, go to Algeria'"*

The two group members were then processed by the Slovenian officers in the station who took their names, fingerprints and photographs. The group members were also forced to strip down to their underwear in order for the police to search them.

While communicating with the police, a female Arabic translator was present and the respondent asserts that throughout the process their requests and statements were intentionally mistranslated. The translator insisted they were obliged to sign removal documents which the respondents companion described as *"forced deportation"*.

The respondent was also forced to pay a fine of 500 euro to the Slovenian police issued as a fixed penalty for their irregular crossing of the Croatian-Slovenian border. A receipt was provided for this payment (see Figure 2 and 3), but no paperwork was given to the respondent in regards to deportation. Translation of the second document (Figure 2) provided to the respondent cites the fine as punishment for illegal border crossing with regards to article 145 of the Aliens act.

The second document (Figure 2) also states that;

*“The procedure was conducted in a language he understands – mother tongue”*

This, in spite of the respondents assertion that the translator present was intentionally mistranslating his statements while at the station, and omitting information.

After the processing, the police officers placed the men in separate cells for the duration of the night. The respondent describes how the Slovenian police did not offer him anything to drink or eat, and he had to rely on what little water he had left from his backpack.

At approximately 12:00 the following day (24th July 2019), the two group members were brought from their cells and taken by police van to a small border crossing point between Slovenia and Croatia. They were handed to Croatian border officials, dressed in sky blue shirts. The respondent recalls seeing the gold emblem on the sleeve of the police officers shirt, concurrent with the uniform of the Croatian *Granična Policija* (border police). The transit group were loaded by the officers into a small marked van and driven to the a nearby police station in Varazdin, Croatia.

The respondent described how he saw two Croatian police officers waiting outside the station, and a further five inside, of whom one was dressed in plain clothes (civilian attire). The officers took the transit groups names and their photographs. Neither the respondent nor his friend asked for asylum in Croatia, describing how:

*“Croatia just deportation”*

At approximately 14:00 the transit group were taken by two Croatian officers from the station in Varazdin and driven in a marked Croatian police van. The journey lasted approximately four hours and they were removed at the police station in Tovarnik, Croatia (45.164101, 19.154694). There, the men waited some minutes in the car park while the officers transferred them to a vehicle from the local police, and then they were driven for a very short ride (described as approximately 1 minute by the respondent) towards the border with Serbia. Two Croatian officers unloaded them from the van and ordered them to walk back into Serbia. There were no Serbian police present at the border, and the transit group returned on foot, entering Serbian territory at approximately 18:00.

The respondents friend described their exasperation at being returned to Serbia after such an arduous journey. Further, once back in Serbia the two group members felt forced to seek improvised shelter because of the unsafe conditions in the nearest official refugee camp,

Principovac. The men stated that the director of the the camp and the security regularly beat the residents of the camp and that an electric taser was used by the Commissariat as a means to inflict pain. The respondent also spoke of the withdrawal of food and the general lack of basic amenities which now forced them to sleep rough in abandoned buildings after their pushback from Slovenia and Croatia. The respondents companion summed this up, stating:

*"Welcome to Serbia"*

22/07/2019

## "CROATIAN POLICE HIT, ONE-BY-ONE, AND SAY 'WELCOME TO BOSNIA.'"

**Date and time:** July 22, 2019 11:00

**Location:** Rupa Border Crossing near Jelšane, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.48936548114246, 14.27771847937629

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: 5-26; rest unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, dog attacks, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 15 Croatian regular police officers, 10 Slovenian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

At approximately 00:00, July 22nd, a 26 year old Pakistani man travelling alone by foot in the Slovenian forest about 25 km from the Slovenian-Croatian border was caught by ten Slovenian police officers. Two police officers were wearing black pants and blue shirts, while the rest were wearing all black. The police officers were not wearing face masks. The officers set two police dogs, without muzzles, loose on the man in the forest and the police dogs bit both his legs and hung on to them. As the man says:

*"They [dogs] ate my foot."*

When the police come over to him after the dog bite attack, the man pleaded with the police for medical help.

*"I tell them 'please help me. I want to go to hospital.' ...Then after they too much beat me. Kicks and box my nose and stick [baton]. I say him 'please I want asylum in Slovenia. Please give me asylum.' They say me no."*

As shown in the quote above, the police laughed at him and asked him why he was crying like a child and two police officers kicked him and beat him with batons and with their hands, punching him. The respondent stated that he felt he was beaten for five minutes. He asked for asylum and the police officers responded by saying "no".

Around 02:00, the man was taken to a police station where he again asked for medical aid and asylum.

*"When I go to police station, I say 'please sir, I want asylum here. Please protect me.' But they do nothing...I say him in the police station 'please help me. I want doctor, please give me first aid.' And they say me 'no, not now. Tomorrow, tomorrow.' After that, two police will come in the room and they beat me."*

The police responded to his repeated medical requests by saying that they will give him medical aid "tomorrow" and after he asked for asylum and medical aid, two police officers entered into his cell and responded to the verbal request by beating him.

The respondent was left in the police station for eight hours, where he was given a small portion of bread and soda only at the end of his detention. During the whole period he was kept alone in the room. After the detainment, the police put him in a car with four other persons. The respondent asserted that these four people were from Afghanistan and there were two minors, brothers: a nine year old male child and a thirteen year old male child. The other two appeared to be eighteen or nineteen.

From Slovenia, they were driven in a hot van (with extreme discomfort) to the official border stop between Croatia and Slovenia at Rupa, Croatia (see map below). There were no benches to sit in the van and the police officers blasted hot air into the rear area of the van where the five passengers were crouched.

On July 22nd, around 11:00, the respondent and the four other people in the van were handed over to the Croatian police. At the point of exchange, the Croatian and Slovenian police talked for 10 minutes at the official border stop, described by the respondent as an "immigration road."

*"Croatian police and Slovenian police talk. They talk I think for ten minutes together about us. And after they push [us] to Croatia police. We say to Croatia police 'please, give us some food. We are very hungry. We are two, three days no eat something.' But they say me 'no.' His [policeman] language very bad. Now I can't say [to] you."*

The respondent and others in the group asked for food and medical aid, prompting the Croatian police to curse at them and beat them with their hands and batons. The respondent stated:

*"I say to the police officer 'please, I want help. I have problem. I need injection [for the dog-bite]. This is very dangerous, serious problem.' But they start beat me...[with] stick and box."*

The respondent stated that the police beat even the two young minors present in the group.

The group was then taken to a police station, where they remained for what he suggested was approximately seven hours in a container. The respondent was placed in this small container with eight other people-in-transit. The respondent stated:

*"When we come in the container and two police come and [hit] everybody with the stick."*

The Croatian police then made them strip to their underwear and seized all their belongings: backpacks, phones, shoes, clothing, etc.

*"Everything out...Money, phone, bag, everything, we give it."*

The respondent was only given one shirt and a pair of shorts: the rest of his belongings and telephone were taken by the police.

After seven hours, the police loaded these nine people into a van and driven to the Croatian-Bosnian border near Velika Kladuša. The inside of the van was very hot and the Croatian police, according to the respondent, purposefully blew hot air into the van. People threw up in response to this treatment.

*"No oxygen, no air... and they [police] speak very bad language, about our mother, our country. 'Pička ti materina.'"*

The respondent stated that he was in the van for approximately five hours; however, the police took a one-hour break in Zagreb to get coffee, leaving the group in the hot van. The police also picked up six other people-in-transit in Zagreb and put them in the van, bringing the total to 15. The respondent stated that the inside of the van was incredibly hot, with no fresh or circulating air or places to sit or hold on to. Some people in the van continued to throw up from the conditions. When someone in the group called for help from the police due to an injury or

complaint, the police insulted and hit the person who had asked for help. In this group of 15, the interviewee states there appeared to be a family from Syria – one woman, one man, and two young children, a boy and girl, both around five to seven years old – four men from Pakistan, three Palestinian men and others.

Around “evening-time”, the respondent thinks approximately 19:30, the van arrives at a location approximately 30km from Velika Kladuša in the “jungle, not immigration road” at the border. Two more police vans arrived and the respondent stated that about 15 policemen were present at the border, wearing black pants and light blue shirts and carrying batons, a description fitting the Croatian regular police uniforms.

The respondent states that the police took the people out of the vans “one-by-one” and beat them on their backs and feet as they exited the van and continued to beat them in the direction of the border. As they were beaten, the police told them: “Welcome to Bosnia.”

*“They [policemen] say like this: ‘come one-by-one, one-by-one, one-by-one.’ Hit, one-by-one and say ‘Welcome to Bosnia.’”*

21/07/2019

## “WHEN YOU SPEAK TO CROATIAN POLICE AND ASK FOR ASYLUM, THEY DON'T LET YOU SPEAK. THEY BEAT YOU.”

**Date and time:** July 21, 2019 16:00

**Location:** Bratkovec, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 46.16028550726642, 15.606369216918892

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 120 person(s), age: 26, 28, 17, 15, 15; rest unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Syria, Algeria, Turkey

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, pepper spray, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 13-14 Slovenian Police Vans, 50 Slovenian police officers, 30 Slovenian "army" members, 12 Slovenian police dogs, 6 Slovenian helicopters, 30 Croatian regular police officers, unknown number of Croatian police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**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

On July 21st, a group of 220 men and underage boys from many countries – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, Algeria, Iran and Turkey – travelling to Italy was apprehended by the Slovenian police in a forest near the Croatian-Slovenian border. Five members of this group – all from Afghanistan, aged 26, 28, 17, 15 and 15 – spoke with the Border Violence Monitoring Network of their experience being pushed back with this group. They stated that of this group of 220, 120 were deported in one mass chain-pushback from Slovenia to Bosnia. After 11 days walking, the group had reached Slovenia by foot. Around 4 or 5pm, the police caught this group in the forest. The respondents describe that five to six helicopters, 13 to 14 police cars and vans, 11 to 12 dogs, 30 “army” members and 40 to 50 police officers, described as wearing light blue shirts and black pants, apprehended this group. Once the police have this group in sight, the police let loose approximately 12 unmuzzled dogs to bite and subdue them. Three of the interviewees had visible scratches and bite wounds from these police dogs.

After this, the police tied the men’s hands behind their backs. A number of violence acts occurred throughout this process: the interviewees state that the police pushed the men, whose hands were tied behind their back, onto the ground until they are lying face down and then the police stamped on their hands repeatedly. The police pushed and kicked the men in the group and beat them with batons while they were tied up and, whilst they were being tied up, pepper sprayed some of them. One interviewee stated that whether or not they listened to the police when the police tell them to stop and stand still, they were pepper sprayed and beaten. When one interviewee mentions “[pepper] spray”, the rest of the group loudly joins in with their own experiences of being sprayed in the forest but one man also says he was pepper sprayed at the police station. Some group members – it is not possible to number them exactly – ask for asylum. However, those that asked for asylum are beaten again and more heavily, and sometimes pepper sprayed after expressing the desire for asylum. Because of this, some stated that they were not able to ask for or express their desire for asylum for fear of being beaten or pepper sprayed. The Slovenian police took their belongings – money, powerbanks, clothing – and smash the charging ports in their phones.

The men in this group were taken in the police vans, with dozens of men per van, to a police station in Slovenia – the respondent does not know how many vans were used. They were kept at this police station for three days with “no water, no food” in rooms with one toilet to many men – exact number unknown. Over time, police give them minimal amounts of bread and water. One man tells the interviewer:

*“They want to deport me. [Then] why do they put me in jail two, three days?”*

The men were finger-printed at the police station. When the men asked the Slovenian police for asylum, the police told them to apply for asylum they must sign a piece of paper. They were then given pieces of paper to sign but the papers were in Slovenian and there were no translated papers or translators present. The men did not know what they signed but they suspected that it was a paper that expressed the intention to be deported out of Slovenia.

On the morning of July 24th, the men and underage boys were put into Slovenian police vans – “1 van with 20 to 30 people [inside]” – and were driven to the Croatian border where they were handed over to the Croatian police at around 8:00 am. The respondents stated that the police

drove “crazy” and people in the vans vomited and fainted because of the driving and lack of fresh air.

When they were handed over to the Croatian police, the men were beaten and then put into Croatian police vans with many men to one van – again, exact numbers are uncertain. They were not taken to a police station. When asked if the men asked the Croatian police for asylum, one man responded:

*“when you speak [to] Croatian police [and] want asylum, they don’t let you speak. They beat you...When you say you want asylum, police tell you no. Police say you go Kabul.”*

The police then drove for 9 hours, and stopped for one to two hours during this time. The police drove recklessly, and again the men described vomiting and fainting in the vans for lack of fresh air, food and water, which they had not been given for some time now. The group of people on the move were brought to the Croatian-Bosnian border 20-30km from Velika Kladusa. The location they identified on the map was Maljevac, Croatia. At the border, there were 25 to 30 officers described as Croatian regular police present, all wearing masks and described as being very big and strong, who beat the men. The police form two columns outside the police vans and had four people come out of the vans at once, at which point they struck them with batons to usher them to run across the border.

*Four people come. Deport. Four people come. Deport.*

This process was repeated until all the men were beaten across the border. Minors were also beaten. The police yelled at them to go to Velika Kladusa.

*Money, shoes, everything. Walk [with] no shoes to Kladusa...No shoes, no shirt, no mobile, no money.*

The group then walked to Velika Kladusa with most of their belongings stolen or destroyed.

**18/07/2019**

**““ONE DAY, NO FOOD, NOTHING.””**

**Date and time:** July 18, 2019 23:30

**Location:** Near Lohovo, BiH

**Coordinates:** 44.71623424241558, 15.924032388611636

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 18 - 30 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** kicking, theft of personal belongings

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five Algerians left to Sturlic from Velika Kladusa and crossed into Croatia in the early morning hours of July 5th. Over the next thirteen days, the group walked through the Croatian interior and entered into Slovenia. On July 17th, with dwindling supplies and rations, the group continued until they neared the village of Kozina (SLO) , approximately three kilometers away from Slovenia's border with Italy.

Exhausted, the group made the decision to seek help by approaching a local Slovenian man for food.

*"And he tell, 'Come come, no problem,' Give me food, give me two tomatoes and bread and milk, and then we go, no problem. When we go to jungle, we are in this way, like this, when we go to jungle, police come. Two, two cars, and we are tired, I can't drink you know, one here and one like this here, you know.*

Shortly after interacting with this Slovenian man, the group was apprehended by two Slovenian police vehicles, one large van and another patrol car, who approached the group while they walked on a field. There were six officers in total. It was approximately 6:00 pm at this point. Exhausted, the group did not attempt to run away from the officers. Shortly after this, the group-members were loaded into the larger of the two vehicles

*"Everybody sit. And take me in car, put me in car, you know car police."*

The group was then driven around 40 minutes back to a police, possibly in Ilirsa Bistrica, where they were were held overnight. In the police station, the respondent described Slovenian police officers searching his belongings and telling him to "Shut up and don't speak". The men were stripped searched and one of the group-members was reportedly told to take off his underwear in front of the officers, leaving him completely naked. The respondent recalled that in another instance, he expressed to the officers in the station that he had a problem with his feet, after walking in the forest for many days, which he was concerned about. In response, the respondent claimed an officer in the station stepped on his foot.

In Slovenia, the respondent had his finger scanned at the police station which determined that he had previously been in Slovenia on another transit attempt

*"I in Slovenia this is the second I go to Slovenia, before 8 month, one I put this [finger] here, he tell me my name. Because...when he put this time, he know me. Exactly, directement."*

There was no translator present during their time in this station and the respondent suggested that this was because they were detained on a weekend, meaning that the translators would not work.

The next morning, the group was transported back to the Croatian-Slovenian border at the Rupa crossing at around 9:00 am, at which time they were given over to the custody of Croatian authorities [45.488297, 14.279180] . The respondent described staying for a

considerable amount of time in this Croatian border station during which time him and his fellow group-members were not given any food.

*"Take me back to Rupa, to border, take me back here. – And put me here, no food, nothing"*

There were not given food during their time in the police station, despite their hunger.

*"One day, no food, nothing. When I tell him give me food, I give you money to buy food, and he tell me 'no, you stay'"*

*"No food, just water."*

*"In police station, inside, and open the, close the door and give you just water and stay."*

At around 7:00 pm later that day, the group was moved into a police van along with a single Pakistani man and driven back to a border area near Bihac (BiH). Upon entering this van, the respondent noted that his and his friends' backpacks were no longer in the vehicle. They were never returned to them. The drive from the Rupa border station back to the Bosnian-Croatian border took quite a long time and the respondent described the journey feeling to be around five hours.

Upon their arrival to the push-back site, which was near Lohovo (BiH) the respondent noted that there was another push-back taking place of around 30 Pakistani men. [Approximate location of the push-back site: 44.718696, 15.921338, see map]

*"When we are in Bihac, there is another camion, maybe 30, 30 person Pakistan"*

The respondent then described being taken out of the van at around 11:30 pm on July 18th. There were approximately four police officers directly interacting with the group at this location holding flashlights and batons. Nonetheless, the respondent described there being many more officers at the location, because he could hear talking in the background. The group was walked for some distance by two police officers who showed them a trail back into Bosnia.

*"Police here walk, and he, he tell you follow me. and there is two police here, and go with you. and he, they show you the way, you know. and when you are in border exactly, he tell you, go there, he tell you go this way. and tell him, this way Bihac. He tell you yes yes Bihac. He tell you just five or three kilometers, you smile because it's a long time, it's twenty kilometers not five."*

*"He tell me go and don't look back. If you talk more, you take and beat."*

*"And you are angry, hungry, you know, you going to, it's nothing, and you can't ask anyone in this, in your way, because it's the night you know, everybody sleep you know."*

The group then walked approximately 20 kilometers back to Bihac, where they arrived at around 3:30 am, and from there continued their journey back to Velika Kladusa in the evening of July 19th.

*"It's a long way, you must to be, walk walk, to Bihac, maybe 20 kilometers."*

The group had several of their mobile phones and power banks stolen from them by the Croatian police. Reflecting on this, the respondent described his confusion in receiving differing treatment for Croatian police officers:

*“Not all police steal. Not all police steal, because I try before, there is police good, no steal, give me everything, give me my bag, give me my phone, but there is police no good you know, he steal he steal everything.”*

14/07/2019

**“ONE OFFICER APPROACHED ME, ASKED "YOU NEED FOOD?" AND HE TOOK HIS CUP OF HOT COFFEE AND SPILLED IT OVER MY FACE.”**

**Date and time:** July 14, 2019 20:00

**Location:** near Poljana, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.210479, 15.929316

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 36, 33, 32, 22 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 4 individuals from Morocco and Algeria crossed the Croatian-Bosnian border 20km south of Velika Kladusa at 8 AM on July 1st.

*“This area has so much mountains, at one mountain I ask my friend: When does this mountain finish? Because for 8 hours we are only walking up and up and up. You need to be strong like a horse for this mountain! It takes so much energy and you need so much water, and in the mountains you don't have water, and maybe if you go down to get water the police will find you.”*

The respondent described how he avoided the military area “Eugen Kvaternik”.

*“In this military zone there is some soldiers who are training in this place. There is space to put guns, space to sleep, but all this jungle and these mountains is for training and shooting. Sometimes there is no training and you can cross easily via there, and sometimes there is training and you get caught there, you never know.”*

After 13 days of walking and crossing the Slovene-Croatian border, on July 13 at around 3 PM, the men were very hungry and one of them decided to go to the village of Markovščina (SLO) (see Fig. 1) to buy food for the whole group while they would wait for their friend in the forest nearby (see Fig. 2).

When he left the shop, the man was approached by 4 local police officers asking him about the amount of food that he bought.

*"They asked 'For who is this?' I say 'For me', but they say 'This is not for you, this is maybe for five or four [people]'."*

The respondent described that his friend was slightly punched in the belly at this point in order to make sure that he follows their order to show them the rest of the group.

*"This man is stupid, really!"*

The man and the officers were walking for approximately 15min until they arrived at the place where the respondent and the other individuals were waiting for him. The respondent described the officers as a group of two men and two women, two of them (one male, one female) dressed in black uniforms similar to boiler suits, the two other ones in blue police uniforms.

*"I think these two wearing boiler suits are not normal police, one of them had a black dog with him."*

Once arrived, they bodysearched the whole group and checked their baggages before escorting all of them to the street where they were ordered to wait for two Audi cars and two windowless police vans with six more police officers dressed in the same blue police uniforms like the officers that the respondent described as 'normal police'. They were asked to put their belts to the baggages which were transported separately from them. The van was without air condition and due to the warm temperatures overheated and the men were driving 25min to a police station that the man was not able to identify.

At the police station, the men were all put in one room and interrogated one by one in another room. When asking for food, the officers only gave them a little bit of the food that one of them had bought in the supermarket in Markovščina (SLO). When complaining about it being their right to get food, one of the officers said:

*"You don't have any rights here, shut up."*

The respondent described how during previous transit attempts when he was apprehended in Slovenia, he was provided a proper place to sleep and food while at this place they were put in a room without furniture together with his three friends and eight other male refugees and migrants from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Two of the Afghan refugees were minors. At 6 PM in the evening of the same day, the respondent went to the window where an officer was standing outside, drinking coffee and smoking.

*"I asked the officer: 'What is this? I didn't eat for 3 days and here is no place to sleep for me.' One officer approached me, asked 'You need food?' and he took his cup of hot coffee and spilled it over my face. Believe me, in this moment I was so confused, I went to the window and shouted that the whole police station could hear me, I asked: 'Where is my right? I though*

*that in Europe I have rights. Where are they? I can't see them here! This is big big – sorry for the word – big shit what you are doing with me! And all of them were so surprised and didn't answer."*

At 9PM in the evening of the same day, the men were given each a small portion of macaroni and salad as well as thin blankets to sleep on the floor. At midnight, the respondent asked to go to the toilet and while he was escorted to the toilet, he asked also to fill up his empty water bottles, but the officer escorting him just kicked the bottle out of his hand.

At 10 o'clock the next morning on July 14, without being provided breakfast, the men were brought in a windowless van to another police station in Croatia that he was unable to identify. The men were asked to put off their shoes next to their baggage and sit down while two Croatian police officers checked their baggage for things they want to keep.

*"As if they were in a market!"*

The officers stole in total 175€, three telephones, three power bank, two pairs of good sneakers, all new clothes in the baggages, 4 sleeping bags and a bottle of the respondents favourite perfume which is '1 million' by Paco Rabanne. When two men from the group put the remaining pairs of shoes on, they felt pain on their soles, the respondents describes it as *"something burning our soles, like acid."* The group spent three hours in total in the police station before being brought in a police van once more together with ten other individuals.

*"Now I want to ask you something: How long does it take from Rijeka [HR] to here [BiH]? Not eight hours, am I right? But this car drives seven or eight hours with us."*

On July 14, at 8 o'clock in the evening, the van dropped them off 30km from Velika Kladusa (see map) at a small street. Two police officers with masks stood on both sides of the van's door and while leaving all men at the same time out of the car they beat them with black batons.

*"If you are fast enough, you can escape from them, if you are too slow, they beat you."*

The men walked back to Velika Kladusa from that point, two of them without shoes.

**02/07/2019**

## **"WHEN WE ASKED FOR WATER, THE CROATIAN POLICE TOLD US 'THIS IS NOT A HOTEL.'"**

**Date and time:** July 2, 2019 00:00

**Location:** 33 km from Bihac

**Coordinates:** 45.033085, 15.759291

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 1 Indian man, 20 years; rest unknown , from: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, India

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Unknown number of Slovenian police officers; 5 regular Croatian police officers; 1 Slovenian police van; 2 Croatian police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Although this report describes a chain pushback – from Slovenia to Croatia and then from Croatia to Bosnia – this report and the summary of the report focuses on the pushback procedure from Croatia to Bosnia due to the respondent's ability to provide more details on this segment of his ordeal.

On the morning of Sunday, June 30th, a 20-year-old Indian man traveling in a taxi with his visa and Indian passport was apprehended by Slovenian authorities around 4-5 km passed the Slovenian-Croatian border near the Italian-Slovenian border. He had been in the taxi for around ten minutes and the taxi was driving through a small Slovenian village at this point. The respondent does not remember the exact location of where he was apprehended or pushbacked to Croatia.

The Slovenian authorities took him to a police station near the border where the respondent expressed an intention to claim asylum in the country and stated that he had papers, both a visa and an Indian passport. The Slovenian police then used a translator to listen to his story and, as he says, his asylum request and wrote it down. The respondent did not sign anything. The authorities then informed him that his asylum request was denied. He asked them why, but did not receive a response. The respondent recalled that Slovenian authorities told him that they had a surprise for him and when he was later brought to the Croatian border to be handed to the Croatian police, he was told that this was his surprise. The respondent did not provide an accurate description of what the Slovenian officers looked like. The Croatian police he identified as wearing light blue shirts.

After being handed over to the Croatian police, the respondent was taken to a police station near the border and put in a room with 7 to 8 other people-in-transit, all men, at sometime between 10:00 or 11:00 am . At this police station, the respondent described being struck by the police officers present and witnessing his luggage, belongings and turban thrown into the trash. When he told the police that he had a passport and visa in his bag and asked for these documents back, they beat him for a long time, as the respondent described, "just for asking". The Croatian officers then seized his passport and visa which the respondent no longer has in possession.

Unlike the Slovenian police, whom the respondent said gave him food, water and would not beat him, the Croatian police would not give him water and food and were physically violent towards him. On the morning of Tuesday July 2nd, the Croatian authorities present at the station loaded the respondent into a police van at around 10:00 or 11:00 am, along with seven other people-in-transit. The seven other people he did not identify by exact age but did identify

one Syrian family with an older man, a mother and two young daughters who the interviewee says are not minors. There was additionally one Bangladeshi man present. The rest of the people were described as Pakistani. The authorities drove them from for around 9 hours, until 7:00 or 8:00 pm from the Slovenian-Croatian border to the Croatian-Bosnian border in a hot van without providing water or food. When the people-in-transit in the van asked for water, the Croatian police replied: "This is not a hotel."

The respondent then described spending between two and three hours at the border. About four to five Croatian police were present: one female police officer and three to four male police officers. The police officers wore black pants and blue shirts, fitting the description for Croatian regular (Temeljna) police officers. The female police officer was seen writing down information and did not wear a mask while some of the male police officers wore black balaclavas and black gloves. For about ten to twenty minutes, the police made the people-in-transit collect garbage in the area. After this, the Croatian police told them to sit and when they sat down, the police beat them on their bodies with batons, especially on their backs and legs. The respondent described that some of the group ran into the forest at this point to avoid the beating however, he sat and received the beating. During this time, there was another van visible at the location in which the respondent described there being an additional 25 to 30 men in transit that were also pushed back. The respondent was not sure where they were from. As they exited the van, the Croatian police beat them with batons.

The respondent was not able to identify the exact location of the pushback however identified it as being near "mountains" about 33 kilometers away from Bihac. Along the border runs a river which is parallel to a road. The interviewee did not recall from what direction he came into Bihac because he used a taxi to get back into Bihac and to avoid the police, the taxi travelled on small roads and through small villages, avoiding main roads and populated places, and travelled downhill. The location of the pushback for this report is thus an estimation.

**07/06/2019**

## **"I SEARCHED FOR THREE HOURS IN THE RIVER [FOR MY FRIEND], BUT HE WAS GONE"**

**Date and time:** June 7, 2019 07:00

**Location:** Kočevje, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.6409009, 14.863312800000017

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 17, 27, 26, 24, 28, 33, , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 10 Croatian police; 9 Slovenian police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Independent person

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of six men from Morocco departed from Bihać (BiH) by bus and arrived in Šturlić (BiH) at around 7:30AM on May 28. They spent the day by the Šturlova River that marks the Bosnian and Croatian borders. The respondent stated that two people driving a car with a Swedish license plate came up, spoke to the group and tried to find out information about where they were going. According to the respondent, he believed these were civilian police officers because a few minutes after the people had left, a Bosnian man told them to be careful because they are police.

The group waited until it was dark outside and around 9:00PM they crossed the small river. They had no trouble getting across because there was a small cable for them to hold onto as they walked through the shallow water. All six group members crossed, but when they arrived in Croatia, there were six or seven Croatian officers waiting for them. Three individuals managed to run away while the other three members of the group were apprehended and pushed back to Bosnia.

The three members of the group who escaped the police walked in the forests for nine days until they reached the Slovenian border. They struggled in the forests because they ran out of food after four days. For five days they walked without eating and three days without water. They arrived to the Slovenian border at 3:00PM on June 6 and they tried to cross the Kolpa River.

*"It took me fifteen minutes to swim across the river. The water looked calm on top, but underneath it felt like someone was pulling me down. I was a swim instructor in Morocco, but my friend could not swim well. He went in the water but he didn't come out. I looked for him for three hours but I never found him."*

The respondent got to the other side of the river but the two other group members could not manage to swim across. One individual was pulled under the water by the undercurrent and did not resurface. The other individual started swimming but turned around and returned to the Croatian side of the border. The respondent left his bag on the Slovenian side of the border and spent three hours swimming in the river looking for his friend and walking along the coast trying to sight him.

Finally, the respondent swam back to the Croatian side of the river and met his friend who had turned around. They gave up on their search for the third member of their group after three hours. They walked along the river to find a place that was more shallow. They traveled two kilometers west and found a place where they could wade through the water to reach the Slovenian side of the border.

As soon as they reached Slovenia, they returned to the village Dolenji Radenci (SLO) where they first tried to cross. The respondent picked up the bag he left behind around 9:00PM and walked at a fast pace for ten more hours, traveling around 40 kilometers until the Slovenian police caught them.

*"We walked fast because we walked on the road. We weren't afraid to walk there because we thought if the police catch us, they will take us to camp in Ljubljana."*

A police car drove by around 7:00AM. There was a male and female officer in the car. The group members told the police that they were going to Ljubljana and the police told them that they would take them there, but first, they must wait.

The police kept the men in the road and after thirty minutes three more officers arrived in a big white van without windows. The three officers put them inside the van and drove twenty minutes to a police station.

*"There was no oxygen inside the van"*

When they arrived at the station, the police checked all of their possessions and put them in a cell for three hours. They were called out one by one and the police told them to open their phones and the police checked their maps and pictures. The police gave a phone back to one group member but not to the respondent. He believed that he had too many points on the map saved and the police didn't want him to have it back.

In the station they also signed nine papers, gave their finger prints and were given a translator who the respondent believes was from Syria. He asked for their identifying information and where they had come from.

In the first day, the police did not give them any food or water. On the second day they received four pieces of bread. They asked to use the toilet and sometimes the police said 'yes', other times the answer was 'no.'

The respondent did not tell the police that they crossed the Kulpa River but the police saw a video in his phone and told him that he was lying. The police drove the two group members back to the river in two vans with 12 Syrians who had also been detained at the police station.

It was a thirty minute drive to the border. The Croatian police were waiting at the border at 11:00AM. The Croatian police took the fourteen individuals to a police station for 30 minutes, where they took the group members' fingerprints and photos. Then the police drove them to the Bosnian border.

*"Ten days of walking and in two hours I found myself back in Bosnia"*

The police left the group in the forest close to the border. They broke their phones, charging ports, and SIM card holders with a knife. The group walked twenty kilometers into Bosnia from the border, and then a car picked them up and drove them to Velika Kladuša (BiH).

05/06/2019

**“THE BOSS OF THE POLICE STATION WAS MAYBE SCARED OF OUR PROTEST. THEN HE ASSURED US, THAT WE CAN GO TO THE CAMP IN LJUBLJANA, BUT THAT WAS A LIE.”**

**Date and time:** June 5, 2019 04:00

**Location:** Croatian/Bosnian border next to Poljana

**Coordinates:** 45.220171, 15.926548

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 22-36 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of eight persons (22-36 years old; from Morocco, Algeria and Western Sahara) left from Izačić (BiH) and continued over the mountains and through the forests. Due to some problems which the group encountered, the group split into two smaller groups of four persons each. One of the groups of four persons walked for around ten days through Croatia and finally reached the Croatian/Slovenian border, north of Rijeka, without any food left. Due to the Kolpa river, the group decided to cross over a bridge after which they encountered a high iron fence with barbed wire (there was a street before and after it). When they climbed over it, they cut their hands badly, leaving the group-members bleeding.

*“As soon as we put our feet on the Slovenian side of the border, 3 police officers with 2 dogs came towards us. Then, another 4 police officers came, because they thought it was many refugees coming.”*

In addition to the bleeding from the wounds on their hands, the group was hungry and cold. Nonetheless, the police did not provide first aid or give them anything to eat. Instead, they put the group of four in a van, locked the door, and drove them to a police station approximately one hour away.

*“One of the police officers said, we have to go back to Croatia because all of the camps in Slovenia are full. But this is a lie.”*

When they were let out of the van and brought into the police station one by one, they gave their names and countries of origin to two female police officers. The officers also took every person's fingerprint of the index finger.

*"We know already, one fingerprint taken means back to Bosnia, ten fingerprints taken means camp."*

There also was a translator from Egypt, who the respondent described as very unfriendly and racist towards them. When they asked for a doctor, because they were still bleeding and the wounds on their hands were hurting, the respondent recounted how the translator just looked at them and told the police, that they did not really need a doctor.

*"Our clothes were full of blood. We asked again for a doctor and the Swiss Cross [Red Cross], to treat us, but the police said no."*

Finally, some police officers put some cream and bandages on their hands.

One man of the group felt very sick, because he was exhausted from the walking, the hunger and the wounds and fainted, after which the police officers brought him to a hospital.

*"Later we found out, that they also pushed him back to Bosnia after he woke up in the hospital."*

In total, they were given 12 documents to sign, which were written in Slovenian. One of them was a fine of 500€ for crossing the border, as the translator explained to them.

*"We refused to sign any documents because we knew, that they wanted to deport us back to Bosnia. We also refused to eat any food. We told them, we want to go to the camp in Ljubljana and then we will eat."*

The police said, that it doesn't matter whether they sign the papers or not. After one day in the police station, the chief of the station came with food to them and tried to convince them, to eat something.

*"He was maybe scared of our protest. Then he assured us, that we can go to the camp in Ljubljana, but that was a lie."*

*"In the room where we were held, there was also a video camera at the ceiling. I think because of this, they didn't touch or hurt us."*

In total the group spent three full days in the police station. Then, in the early morning of 5 June at 1:00AM, five police officers came into the room and handcuffed them with their hands behind their backs. Again, they told the group-members that they would bring them to the camp in Ljubljana as they brought them outside.

*"There were even three police officers with three horses, because they are afraid that we would run away into the forest. And they wanted to scare us with this."*

The officers put the group of three into a prisoner-transport van and locked the door behind them. Like this, they drove them again about one hour to a border crossing, where Croatian authorities were waiting for them. The three Slovenian police officers pushed them out of the

van, took off the handcuffs, and handed them over to the Croatian authorities. Then, one by one, they had to sign a paper with their name and a number on it; a Croatian police officer made pictures with his smartphone of them, while they had to hold this paper in front of their chests. Around this time the friend, who was sick in the hospital, was brought with them to the border.

*"In Croatia, if you don't sign this paper you have a big problem. When they push you back to Bosnia, they beat you very hard, if you don't sign. And you have to shut up, if you speak anything they will break your face."*

Three Croatian police officers pushed them into another van and drove them within four hours to the Croatian/Bosnian border. The drive was described as being very uncomfortable for the group members, because of erratic driving on mountain roads, forcing the group members inside of the van to fall over each other and hit their head on the sides of the back of the van. Also the drivers turned on the air conditioners in the back of the car, so that the three friends were left very cold.

At 4:00 am in the morning, when it was still dark, they arrived at the Croatian/Bosnian border, not far from Velika Kladuša. When the car stopped, they were let out two by two. In front of the door there were seven police officers with balaclavas and sticks waiting for them. They took everything from them, like backpacks, sleeping bags, food, smartphones, power banks and all the money and destroyed or stole it. Then they hit them from every side with batons and also kicked them and told them to go to the Bosnian side of the border.

*"If you go down, they kick you and beat you very hard. You just have to run. Last year they broke the leg of a friend, I saw it with my own eyes."*

The police officers forced them to jump into the Glina river directly at the border, where the water rose to their chests.

After this, they had to walk eleven kilometers to Velika Kladuša, which took around six hours, because two of the persons no longer had shoes.

*"We had to walk very slowly, because we had a lot of pain on the feet."*

**31/05/2019**

## **"I HEARD MY FRIEND SHOUTING FOR HELP, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO TO PROTECT HIM FROM THE BEATINGS"**

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

**Location:** Bogovolja, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.07021084363311, 15.751034937935515

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 33, 35 , from: Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock

**Police involved:** 10 Slovenian police, Slovenia police jeep, 2 Slovenia police cars, 2 Slovenia police vans; 8 Croatian police, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On May 21, a group of eight individuals from Syria and Iraq (ages 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 33 and 35 years old) departed from Velika Kladusa (BiH) at 10:00PM. They took a 20 minute taxi ride to the border and crossed the border into Croatia around 10:30PM. They walked until 7:00AM and slept in the forest until 7:00PM on May 22. They continued walking through the forests in Croatia for three more days like this, walking at night and taking rest during the day.

On the fourth day, the group waited at the meeting point for a taxi that would transport them to the Slovenian border. Two taxis arrived at 11:00AM on May 25 and the eight individuals split into two groups of four and rode in the taxis until 5 kilometers before the Slovenian border. They spent the next three days walking in the forest in Slovenia, but their food supply ran out.

“We were so hungry we ate the leaves from the trees.”

On May 28, the group had made it to the forest around Kostanjevica na Krki (SLO) and were waiting at the second meeting point for their scheduled taxi. They waited one day, but the taxi never arrived and the group decided to leave the forest and walk down to the village to find someone who could help them. They found a Slovenian man who gave them chocolate, bread and cigarettes and told them to walk to a larger village 20 kilometers away and catch a bus to Ljubljana from there.

As the group started walking along the road towards this village, two Slovenian police officers (one male, one female, both around 30 years old) arrived around 3:00PM on May 29, driving what was reported as a black jeep with an open back. The respondent reported that these officers were very kind. They searched the belongings of the group then two police cars and two police vans arrived with eight police officers present. The police separated the individuals into two groups with four persons in each van and drove them approximately twenty minutes to a police station.

The respondent reported that they were put into a garage next to the police station around 4:00PM. Inside the garage there were 30-40 beds and all of them were full. The garage was cold and all of their clothes were wet. There were many police at this garage and they checked the people one-by-one. They took their phones and put them in a bag with a number on it and wrote the number on each person's hand (their phones were eventually given back to them). They were given food after two hours. The group reported that they tried to ask for asylum but the translator present did not translate this request. They wrote down their personal information (name of father, mother, age and place of birth) and signed papers.

After 24 hours, around 3:00PM or 4:00PM on May 30, the group was put into one police van and taken to what the respondent believed was the Croatian border. Two Croatian police officers (one female in her 30s, one male in his 50s) wearing a dark blue uniform led the group into a small room at the police station where the group was held for 4-5 hours. The room had five other men from different countries (Yemen, Syria, and Iraq). There was one toilet, one bed and one window with thick glass. The police checked their names, took the documents they received from Slovenia, and told the men to remove their belts and shoe laces.

The police release the men from the room around 9:30PM and ordered them into one police van, which was driven by two male police officers. The respondent did not see their faces to report on their ages or appearance. They drove approximately two hours in the van.

Once they arrived at the Croatian/Bosnian border, near the town of Bogovolja (HR), the police separated the eight individuals into two groups of four. One officer placed a stone on the Croatian border line and another stone on the Bosnian border line. In between was "no man's land." Four additional police officers were there, wearing Baklava face masks and holding batons. A man with a "hard voice" told the first group to go and the four people ran through "no man's land" to reach the "safe zone" in Bosnia while the four officers swung their batons at them as they ran.

"Two minutes [felt like] five hours"

When the first four arrived in Bosnia, they heard the officer shout "Go" for the second group. One man from this group fell down in "no man's land." The respondent could hear his friend screaming, but said there was nothing he could do to help him. For what felt like two minutes the four officers beat the fallen man with batons and subjected him electric shocks. They eventually let him go and he joined the rest of his group on the Bosnian side of the border.

The group walked twelve kilometers from the border to a gas station and a man at the station called them a taxi which took the group to Bihac (BiH), where they arrived at 5:00AM on May 31.

**31/05/2019**

**"WHEN SOME OF THE DETAINEES ASKED FOR FOOD, THE OFFICERS SOLD THEM 3 SMALL SANDWICHES FOR 60€ AND 3 PACKAGES OF CIGARRETTES FOR 50€."**

**Date and time:** May 31, 2019 01:00

**Location:** near Sturlic, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.064241, 15.747204

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 19, 19, 19, 20, 21, unknown , from: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, threatening with guns, theft of personal belongings

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of five individuals from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia left Šturlić at 5AM in the morning of May 20th and headed towards Croatia. Soon after their departure, while crossing Korana river, one of their friends injured his arm and decided to return to Šturlić and from there get back to Miral camp in Velika Kladuša (BiH), so the five individuals continued their journey without him. They walked for 9 days through forests, avoiding bigger streets only using small forest trails. While passing by Rijeka (HR), the group tried to avoid the touristic areas in the forest because

*“when there is tourists, then there is police!”*

The respondent reported that after Rijeka, the group came across units of Croatian police officers three or four times, mostly while crossing bigger streets,

*“but no problem, they say stop, I don't stop, I run run run!”*

They crossed towards Slovenia near the official border crossing point Pasjak (HR) and were apprehended on a small road near Povžane (SLO) on May 29 around 9AM by 5 Slovenian police officers, around 10km before the Italian-Slovene border. Three of the respondent's friends managed to escape, but he and one other friend were apprehended. Two of the officers are described as “Slovenian military”, with green-brown uniform, masks and “big guns, no small police gun, bigger”, 3 others as “Slovenian normal police” with dark blue uniforms and no masks, they arrived in 2 blue-white police vans. After being caught, the respondent and his friend were held on the forest ground for 30min with the “military officers” in their back pointing their weapons on them while the “normal police officers” were standing in front of them talking on a walkie-talkie coordinating another van to come. While waiting for the car to arrive, the men were casually asked for their nationality and their age and were body searched by the regular officers, but as the respondent had hidden his money very diligently in his clothes, they did not find anything. They were also asked for their phones, however the respondent's friend did not possess a phone and the respondent himself had thrown his phone away just before the officers managed to catch him.

*“If they don't have my phone, they don't see my pins on the map, so I can try next time. When they tried to catch me, I threw it far far away in the forest.”*

After around 30min, another blue-white van without windows arrived and the men were driven to the police station in Podgrad (SLO), 10 minutes drive from their point of apprehension.

At the police station, the respondent was stripped to his t-shirts and 200€, he had kept in his boxer shorts, were taken from him.

*"I said: This is my money, they said: give me this!, I said: why?, they shout: give me this!"*

The respondent's friend was stripped as well, but the officers did not find any money in his clothes as he did not have anything.

The two men were detained in a small room without furniture together with eight or nine individuals from Pakistan. At around 1PM on the same day (May 29th), the man was interrogated separately from his friend by 2 police officers and one 50-year-old translator whose accent the respondent described as Syrian. The respondent had his finger prints taken, asked his personal data and his intended destination, and even though his plan was to reach Italy, he said that he wanted to go to Ljubljana (SLO) and ask for asylum there. However, he assumed that the translator did not translate this intention to ask for asylum properly to the officers. Also, the respondent had to sign a number of documents that he was not explained the content of by the translator.

*"He said: Just sign!"*

The whole interrogation took approximately 30min. The respondent was brought back to the detention cell where he spent the rest of the day and the night on the floor.

*"I know at 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock, I check the time and I know that my 3 other friends arrived in Italy long ago. I sit in the cell and think about what they do now in Italy while I sit here on the floor."*

The only food they were given during all of this time was plates of spaghetti at around 10PM in the evening, whenever one of the detainees knocked against the door, they were either ignored or answered with much delay.

At 10AM the next morning (May 30st), all detainees were put in one van and driven 30min on a normal street to the border crossing point Starod (SLO) where they were handed over to Croatian police officers who put all of them (around 20 individuals) into a prisoner van.

They were driven for 10min to a police station in Croatia where they again were stripped and put into a detention cell. When some of the detainees asked for food, the officers sold them 3 small sandwiches for 60€ and 3 packages of cigarettes for 50€. Again, all detainees were interrogated one by one, this time however without any translator present. The respondent was asked his personal data, pictures were taken of him and had to sign documents in Croatian without being explained the content. The whole group stayed in the detention cell until 6PM in the evening of the same day and were then put into a windowless van with more individuals and three Croatian police officers with black uniforms sitting in the front. The respondent reported to be locked in the van for six hours while the van was driving non-stop with a break of a couple of hours.

The whole group arrived at the point near Sturlic (see map) around 1 o'clock in the morning of May 31st. There were two more police cars with five more police officers wearing night sight goggles, masks and the same black uniforms as the three who were sitting in the front of the prisoner van.

*"They open the door and say: Go, go, go!"*

The police officers were standing on both sides of the door forming sort of a tunnel towards the Bosnian border that the individuals had to pass while being kicked and beaten with black batons from both sides. The individuals crowded out of the van all at the same time and tried to get their belongings that were piled up a few meters further. All phones had been destroyed. After the whole procedure, the respondent and his friend walked towards Šturlić.

The respondent and his friend took a taxi with other people of Turkish nationality who were pushed back together with him and drove back to Velika Kladuša where he went to Miral camp.

**29/05/2019**

## **“WE BEGGED FOR ASYLUM IN SLOVENIA, BUT THE POLICE TOLD US THEY WILL TAKE US BACK TO CROATIA”**

**Date and time:** May 29, 2019 08:00

**Location:** Bosnian-Croatian border, near Velika Kladuša

**Coordinates:** 45.1840797, 15.8068421

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 15 people between the age of 23-28, 21, 24, 23, 22, 21, from: Palestine, Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 9 Slovenian police officers, 2 vans; 8-9 Croatian police officers, 3 vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the 22nd of May at 12:00AM, a group of 20 individuals from Palestine and Syria left Velika Kladuša (BiH) and walked to the Croatian border. They arrived at the border around 2:00AM. After entering Croatia, they walked in the forest for seven days.

They crossed the Croatian/Slovenian border on the 29th of May. After walking approximately ten kilometres into Slovenian territory, a group of five Slovenian police officers (four male, one female) approached them at 8:00AM in the forest between the villages of Koritno and Laze (SLO). The respondent reported that when the police saw the group, one officer aimed a gun at them, but did not shoot. The police assorted all twenty to a parked van nearby. They waited inside the vehicle for one hour before the police officers began driving.

The group were driven approximately 30 minutes to what the respondent described as a "small jail." The police ordered all 20 individuals into the cell. The group stayed here for 24 hours without access to food, water or a toilet. The respondent reported that the Slovenian police took 200 EUR from him and took a total of 1200 EUR from the rest of the group.

There was a translator present at the jail. The respondent could not identify where he was from by his accent. The group members gave their personal information to the translator and the police gave them documents to sign. The police also took the finger prints of the group members during this time.

*"Ten [people in the group] begged the Slovenian police to let us stay and apply for asylum, but they told us 'no, you will go back to Croatia'"*

On May 30, at around 12:00PM, four different police officers (three men, one woman) ordered the group of 20 individuals into one police van and they drove one hour to the Croatian border. It was reportedly in the area of Jesenice na Dolenjskem.

*"It was very crowded and hot in the van with so many people. [The police] drove very fast to the border."*

The group arrived to the Croatian border around 1:00PM. Four to five Croatian police were waiting there with three vans and they ordered the group into the vehicles and drove them approximately one hour to another "jail." Once inside the building, the police collected everyone's phone. All 20 people were placed in one cell. There was a tap with water in the cell which they could drink from, but the police denied them access to food or to use the toilet. The group spoke very little to the officers. They were not given any documents to sign, nor did they ask the group for their identifying information.

On May 31, after 24 hours in the cell, the police released them from the jail and ordered the group into a van that was waiting for them in front of the cell. The respondent believes that the four police officers drove them approximately three hours to the Bosnian border. On the border, the police gave the phones back to the group but the screens had been smashed and the charging ports were destroyed.

They were all then pushed into Bosnian territory. The respondent could not recall the exact location. But he maintained it was near a "village in the area of Velika Kladuša."

*"When we got to the border, the police said 'go, go.'"*

From here, the split into four groups and paid ten Euro each to ride in a taxi to Velika Kladuša (BiH).

28/05/2019

## “THE THREE MEN WERE STILL JUST IN THEIR BOXERS WHILE BEING INTERVIEWED BY THE FEMALE OFFICER.”

**Date and time:** May 28, 2019 04:00

**Location:** Bosnian-Croatian border, near Glinica

**Coordinates:** 45.2270533, 15.9584276

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 27, 29, 30 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, gunshots, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 2 Croatian officers shooting in the air near Zvecaj; 2 Slovenian policemen at place of apprehension; 1 Slovenian policeman and translator in Novo Mesto police station; 4 Croatian policemen taking the group over at Vinica border crossing (1 of whom was the "chief", with two stars sewed on his shoulder); 6 police officers (4 male and 2 female) in Karlovac police station; 8 or 9 Croatian policemen, all wearing ski masks, at the site of the pushback to Bosnia. - 2 police cars in Slovenia, 4 police cars and 1 van in Croatia.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen



The respondent started his journey from Sturlic (BiH) with initially five other people. He believes it was the 18th of May 2019. The group was composed of two Syrians, one Iraqi and three Algerians.

After four days of walking inside Croatia, the group reached a bridge over the Mreznica river, near Zvecaj (HR, coordinates 45.394045, 15.435721), around 11 P.M. On the other side of the bridge, at the left of the group, two policemen were hiding. They shot twice in the air and managed to arrest the two Syrians and the Iraqi member of the group, while the respondent and his two Algerian friends ran back into the forest located south the bridge, aside of the road. The policemen didn't run after them, and after having some sleep in the forest, they were able to cross the bridge without problems in the next morning and to pursue their journey.

On their tenth day of walking, i.e. 28 May, at 4 A.M., the group of now three men had reached Smarje-Sap (SLN, coordinates 45.9734212, 14.6185612). They were walking on the main road in the town center which runs parallel to the highway, when a Slovenian police car approached them and stopped them. Two Slovenian police officers in uniform asked them about their names, age and country of origin and then made them enter the car. They took them to Novo Mesto police station (coordinates 45.81729, 15.1548447).

In Novo Mesto police station, the respondent was interviewed. He sat in an office with one policeman and the translator. His fingerprints and photos were taken, and he was asked personal details such as his name, age, country of origin and the names of his mother and father and also about the road they had taken to reach Slovenia.

The respondent asked for asylum, but the translator directly refused that request, without translating it to the policeman. The translator told the respondent "you Algerians and Moroccans you don't have the right for asylum in Slovenia, go ask asylum in France, Belgium, Germany".

The respondent was made sign a paper in Slovenian language, the content of which he wasn't able to understand. In this moment he perceived the policeman as being very aggressive, and he had the impression that if he didn't sign he would have been beaten. Nevertheless his impression about the general Slovenian police behavior, especially compared to his experience in Croatia, was relatively positive:

*"Police Slovenia ok, police Croatia mushkila kabira [big problem]"*.

The respondent was largely impressed by the behavior of the translator, too. This person was described as being a middle aged Palestinian man, very aggressive towards the respondent.

*"Wallah he's crazy. Police OK, but he's crazy."*

The respondent and his group were kept in Novo Mesto police station for the whole day, and he said he was given food and water. In the late afternoon of 28 May, he and his friends were taken to the border crossing in Vinica (45.4570672, 15.248562). The drive took about one hour.

At the border they were handed over to four Croatian policemen, one of whom the respondent described to have been the chief. The respondent saw two stars sewed on his shoulder. The Croatian officers handcuffed the group and took them in three separate police cars, with three policemen in each car, to Karlovac police station (45.4910003,15.5456485).

In the police station, they were put in a cell of about 2x3 meters, without toilet or beds. They  
address, left with only two and the door was

11/05/2019

“HE SAID(...) 'SLOVENIA CATCHES YOU RETURNS YOU TO CROATIA, WHAT IS CROATIA SUPPOSED TO DO? RETURN YOU TO BOSNIA! SO GO, GO BOSNIA(...)'”

**Date and time:** May 11, 2019 13:00

**Location:** Bosnian-Croatian Border, near Velika Kladuša

**Coordinates:** 45.1840797, 15.8068421

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 21-32 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian police officers, 1 translator, 5 Croatian police officers, 4 Croatian border officers, 1 Slovenian police van, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group started the journey from Velika Kladuša (BiH) on the May 6th. They walked during the night and slept during the day because of Ramadan. After four days, the men reached Slovenia, where they walked for another day.

On the morning of May 11th, they woke up to rain. With everything wet and being unable to sleep any longer, the men split into three different groups of two and walked to the nearest village, Metlika (SLO), to take shelter. At around 1:00 pm, two Slovenian police officers approached the respondent and his friend. They were told to stop. The respondent believed at the time that he and his friend would have a chance to express their intention to seek asylum.

*“I said to my friend it’s ok we are only two they will take us into the camp, everything is alright.”*

The two men were taken to a police station at 3:00 pm, where they were questioned by police officers who utilized a translator. The respondent described that this was the third time he had come across this particular translator. He described him as large, bald-headed man, with tanned skin and large eyebrows. The respondent described him as being somewhere between 40 and 50 years old.

*“I can never know where he is from though. Because the first time I met him he said he was from Syria, but I know the Syrian accent very well, so I told him that I knew he was lying.”*

The respondent recalled that this interpreter had told him in the past that he would help him go to a camp in Slovenia where he would be able to access asylum procedures, if he came to the country "in another way." When this translator saw the respondent again, he said: "Oh you are here again!" To which the respondent replied: "Yes, I came another way, will you help me go to the camp now?" This was met with the response "no, not like this, you have to try again."

In the police station, the respondent described having his picture taken, in addition his name was registered and he was given paper to sign.

*"I tell what is this? Because it is in Slovenian language... One nice police told me that it was because I was entering Slovenia in an illegal way so I must pay 500 euros, but he knew I was refugee and had no money so I must sign that and they return me back to Croatia."*

The two group-members stayed overnight in this police station. They could not recall its location.

Two of the other people from their original group joined them later in the station.

On the morning of May 12th, the four men were put inside a vehicle and driven to the Croatian border. At this point, five Croatian police officers, two of whom were women, waited for them at the other side of the border. The group was then driven for around 40 minutes to a police station in Croatia. The respondent also had no knowledge of the exact location of this place.

In the police station, the authorities searched the men and took their phones, money and powerbanks.

The respondent described that at around 1:00 pm, the officers told them to go to sleep and put them inside of a room which he described as dirty and dark.

*"You can see is a nasty room, you sleep in here the toilet is just there, next to your had"*

After three hours, the police transferred the group to another vehicle with two policemen inside and drove them for one hour until they reached the Bosnian-Croatian border.

At the border, there were four other policemen waiting for the group. The respondent described the uniforms of the officers as being different. There was one female officer and two male officers dressed in black. The respondent described another, who he inferred was the leader of the group, who wore a dark shirt and light blue trousers. The man claimed that when the presumed leader was present, the other officers typically use less force.

*"I think he is the boss so I asked him why they were doing this. He said: 'We don't have a problem with you there is no problem for us, we know you are refugee. The problem is Slovenia, Slovenia catches you, returns you to Croatia, What is Croatia supposed to do? Return you to Bosnia! So go, go Bosnia we don't have a problem with you.'"*

The officers returned the group-members phones as they left the car. The phones were completely broken.

*"Why you do that? This is my phone, Why crashing my phone? They said: 'No, it was not us, it was like that before, the problem was at the police station. Go away, go away!' If you not go away they will beat you so I went."*

The respondent also recalled that the group's money was not returned. They group walked for four hours back to Velika Kladuša (BiH), and arrived to the city at around 8:00 pm.

08/05/2019

## “NOBODY TRIED TO RESIST IT. YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING, THEY WILL BEAT YOU.”

**Date and time:** May 8, 2019 05:00

**Location:** Višnja Gora, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.9567291, 14.7443778

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 17-36 years old , from: Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 7-8 Slovenian police officers at the place of apprehension (3 of them in plain clothes, among them 1 woman); unknown number of officials in a police station in Slovenia and in another police station in Croatia; 4 officers wearing ski-masks at the pushback site at the Croatian-Bosnian border. - A white police car and a police van with a blue strip and the inscription "Policija" on the side in Slovenia. Another van in Croatia.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

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

ORIGINAL REPORT

In the morning of May 2, a group of four men set out from Sturlic (BiH). After crossing the border to Croatia, they continued and crossed Croatia by foot.

*"We walked for 6 days in the jungle trying to avoid all the villages and towns, to avoid any problem. We were so deep in the jungle that we even saw bears one morning. We screamed and ran away".*

On the sixth day, on May 7, the four men reached the Slovenian border near the town of Pribanjci. They did not have any food or water left. They crossed the river at the estimated coordinates 45.451219,15.243339 and entered Slovenian territory. It was 7 am.

After several kilometers of walking into Slovenia, they spotted a house and asked the residents for food and water, which they gave.

After one day and one night of walking in Slovenia, they arrived early in the morning at Višnja Gora and waited in a small square near a church deciding what to do next.

After 20 minutes there, it started raining and they decided to buy a ticket to Ljubljana. However, they never had the chance to do that because two policemen and one policewoman dressed as civilians arrived.

*"They made us sit down on the ground and asked for our IDs. We asked for asylum, but the policemen just remained silent and did not take any action".*

A few minutes later, a white police car and a police van with a blue strip and the inscription "Policija" on the side arrived. 4-5 officials came out of the two vehicles. Each man of the group was searched and their phones and money were taken from them. The respondent had a Galaxy A3 and 200 Euros, another member of the group had an iPhone.

*"They asked us where we crossed the border. They wanted the exact location. Then they took us with a van without seats nor windows to that spot. It took us 40 minutes to get there and once there they took a picture of the spot with one of my fingers pointing at it".*

Afterwards, the four men were taken to a police station, which was only 5 minutes away. It was late in the afternoon.

The authorities there took pictures of each of them with a computer camera and also took their fingerprints.

*"They took all my fingerprints. The others only had to give their index fingerprint".*

Then they had to sign five documents in Slovenian. The respondent and his fellow Algerian friend did not ask for a translator. The two other Syrian men had a translator.

*"When I asked why I had to sign those papers, the authorities answered me that they had to decide if they were sending us to Ljubljana or back to Croatia. So I signed."*

They spent 3 nights in that police station. The four men were split into two groups and put in two cells, with one Syrian man and one Algerian man in each cell. They were given dry clothes, blankets, cigarettes and they slept on beds.

*"At some point I really started believing that we were going to be brought to the capital."*

05/05/2019

## “EVERY CHANGE OF CAR THEY BEAT!’ - THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS PUSHED BACK TOGETHER PART 1”

**Date and time:** May 5, 2019 15:30

**Location:** 10km inside Slovenia, near to Sinji Vrh

**Coordinates:** 45.452846883100605, 15.202590737916353

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 25-50 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 slovenian military officers, croatian police officers, croatian police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group started their journey from the city of Bihać (BiH) on the 29th of April at 7:00 pm. After several hours of walking, they crossed the Bosnian-Croatian border and continued walking through the forest.

After seven days of walking, the men crossed the Slovenian border, and after walked around 10 km further inside the country were stopped by four Slovenian authorities who were described to be wearing uniforms similar to those worn by military officers. It was around 3:30 pm at this point. The officers were described as threatening the group-members with their firearms, telling them to stop, and then searching them. The authorities then made a call on the radio, and drove them to the border where a Croatian police van was already waiting.

Four Croatian policemen, wearing blue uniforms, were described as being physically violent with the group, striking them with batons, while the military officers were still present and watching the scene. After this, the group-members were put in the van and driven for two hours to a police station in Croatia.

In the police station, the group-members' names were registered and their pictures were taken. They were then told to sign a paper, although the contents of this paper was unknown to them since it was in Croatian. The men described again being beaten by the officers, who struck them with batons and fists. Their phones, powerbanks, money, and several other personal items were taken at this point as well.

*'One man, he was about 45 years old, he had glasses, the police took his glasses and broke them'*

The group was kept in the station for somewhere between six and seven hours without any access to food or water.

In the evening, the group-members were led by either four or five Croatian police officers, who wore blue uniforms, into the dark back part of a vehicle. This vehicle driven for relatively short amount of time before stopping in another station where the officers brought an Iranian man into the vehicle (referred to in a **separate report**). After an hour of more driving, they stopped again and changed into another van where two afghani were already present (referred to in a **separate report**). The group described that they were beaten with the use of batons while being transferred to the other vehicle. Two of the officers also hit the group, of now twelve men, after they asked about their location.

The men were left, after a two hours journey, at the Bosnian-Croatian border at around 3:00 am of the 6th of May, near Velika Kladuša. They walked back to the city all together. Most of the men presented severe injuries.

**04/05/2019**

## **“EVERY CHANGE OF CAR THEY BEAT! THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS PUSHED BACK TOGETHER PART 2”**

**Date and time:** May 4, 2019 15:00

**Location:** Vremski Britof

**Coordinates:** 45.6573806, 14.028732999999988

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 21 and 22 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pouring water over one's head, threatening with guns, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** slovenian police officers, slovenian police cars, croatian police officers, croatian police cars, 1 croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The two men started their journey from Šid (SRB) where they hid under a train in order to enter one of its containers during the night. For two whole days they remained in the containers, being taken all the way to Slovenia. In Slovenia, they left the containers and started doing the rest of the travel by foot.

The men walked for around six hours in the forest until the data on their phones ended and, without being able to consult maps any more, they got lost. After a while wandering around they arrived to Vremški Britof. In the village they inquired about their location to several people. The respondent inferred that these individuals later called the police to catch them. Two young Slovenian policemen in blue uniforms arrived around 3:00 pm.

*'They came and I spoke asylum, but they no asylum, and they started searching my bag and putting water on my friend and beating him in the face.'*

The officers took the men's phones and powerbanks and drove them to a police station. They stayed in the station for around two hours. Their names were registered and their pictures were taken. In this location, the men asked once more for asylum but their request was again ignored.

They were driven for around five hours to another station. The location of the place was completely unknown to the men because they were put in the dark back part of the vehicle. In this second station, the man were told to sign a paper.

*'They asked us if we know asylum, then we should write our name sign there. They say that they were asylum papers, but I don't think they were'*

The men were kept there for around eight hours, being put in a dark room without any access to water or food.

In the morning, at around 8:30 am, the two men were put in a police car with two officers and driven for around 30 min to the Croatian border. At the border, they were told to get out of the vehicle. Two Croatian police officers with blue uniforms and a badge on their shoulder were waiting for them and requesting once more for their signature on a paper. The two group-members could not understand what was written on the papers, since it was in Croatian. The men were transferred to a Croatian police car and driven for less than an hour to a Croatian police station. Again the respondent had no notion of the location of the place, since it was dark inside the vehicle.

In this last station, the respondent described being forced to sign another document and then later beaten when asking for asylum. *'They beat me in the face with their hands.'* remarked the respondent while showing the bruised and swollen left side of his face and saying he was embarrassed of it. They were kept in a room with three beds until nighttime, at which point the policemen took them to a van where there were already ten other men (the men referred to in two other reports from this month – **1**, **2**) and four police officers with blue uniforms.

In the last vehicle, two of the officers also hit the group (which was now 12 men,) after they asked about their location. The men were left, after a two hours journey, at the Bosnian-Croatian border at around 3:00 am of the 6th of May, near Velika Kladuša. They walked back to the city all together. A number of the men presented severe injuries.

03/05/2019

## ““EVERY CHANGE OF CAR THEY BEAT.” THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS PUSHED BACK TOGETHER PART 3”

**Date and time:** May 3, 2019 10:00

**Location:** Preža

**Coordinates:** 45.543930746810766, 14.829207945986582

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 46 , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting

**Police involved:** 5 slovenian police officers, slovenian police car, 7 or 8 slovenian military, 1 slovenian military van, 4 croatian police officers, 1 croatian police van.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent left from Bihac on April 20th with a group of nine other young men from Afghanistan. It was rainy and the pathway was quite muddy and the group walked slower than they had originally planned. After four days of walking, near Jezerane (HR), the respondent slipped and broke his foot. The group decided to leave him behind as a result of this injury since he could no longer keep the pace.

The respondent kept walking alone, albeit at a slower pace, lost in the mountain since his phone's battery had finished. After five days, his food had finished and he continued the journey without it for 4 or 5 more days.

*“I think it was 10 days that I was in the mountains and from the sun and everything I found North, and I went to North, just North.”*

Around this time, the respondent described encountering a bear in the forest. While attempting to avoid the animal, he approached a village in which he encountered a man and inquired as to where he was. The man

responded that he was in Slovenia and communicated to him that he should continue.

*They said here is Slovenia, if you want go, go this way, this way is Italy, go don't stay here'*

At this time, with his broken foot and his hunger, the respondent did not have the ability to walk anymore. Therefore, he decided to ask the man to call the police. Some time later, two police officers – a man and a woman – arrived to the location and apprehended him.

The respondent recalled being forcefully asked by the officers as to the route which he had taken into the country.

*"They captured me and they beat me and [asked] 'Where you come to Slovenia? from which point you come to Slovenia? Who give you this point? and I said I don't know I'm here. They brought me near the river [and told me] 'You came from this point' I said no, I didn't come from here.'*

The officers took a photo of him at this location, justifying that because he came from there a picture must be taken.

After this picture was taken, the respondent described being taken to an office which he believed was a "UN building". The man recalled that he was not answered after asking for the location of this building. While at this location, he described asking for asylum, claiming that his wife and child are currently living in Germany. An interrogation was conducted at this location, with the use of a translator. His name, nationality and age were asked in addition to where he had come from and how had he reached Slovenia. The interviewee believed that he was kept in this location for 7 hours.

He then described being taken by two policemen to a police station, approximately two hours away, where he stayed overnight. He was provided food in this location.

In the morning, he was transferred to yet another police station which had four or five Slovenian officers who were described as wearing military-style uniforms. This station was a one hour drive away from the previous one. He was placed in a dark room with no windows and kept there for 10 or 12 hours until night time, not being given any food. Photos and fingerprints were taken again and his signature was demanded.

*"I asked about asylum, where I should go and in this point they said 'you should go to Croatia'."*

*"I said I want to stay here as a refugee but they said 'We don't need you, we don't want you to stay here'."*

In the evening, he was brought to a police van with four officers, where he was held with nine Pakistani men (referred to in a separate **report**), they were driven for one hour and then moved

into another vehicle, where they were joined with two Afghan men (also referred in a separate report).

*'The van was dark and without windows and we asked to the police where we were, they didn't answer us and beat us when we ask and for every change they beat, every change of car they beat.'*

The respondent described having no knowledge about their location at any point of the way.

*'They didn't answer us. I know they capture me in Slovenia because they showed me a map and said they captured me there, after that I don't know anything, I don't know where they bring me'*

The group described being beaten with the use of batons while being transferred to another vehicle. Two of the officers also hit the group (now twelve men) after they asked about their location. The men were left, after another two hours of driving, at the Bosnian-Croatian border at around 3:00 am on May 6th, near Velika Kladuša. They walked back to the city all together. Most of the men presented severe injuries.

**22/04/2019**

## **“MORE DAYS WALKING MEANS MORE FOOD, LESS TIME USING THE POWER BANKS.”**

**Date and time:** April 22, 2019 07:30

**Location:** Ribnica, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.748765, 14.736576

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 24-40 , from: Morocco, Eritrea, Egypt

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 1 Slovenian police man and 1 police woman with blue uniforms, 2 Slovenian police vans, 1 Slovenian police interrogator with Arabic translator, 4 Croatian police officers with black uniforms, 1 Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of five men started their journey at around 5:00 am on the 17th of April from the city of Sturlic. After passing what was described as the first mountain, one of the individuals decided to return, because

he could not deal with his tiredness. For several days, the group walked as fast as they could, sometimes sleeping only two hours per night.

*"More days walking means more food, less time using the power banks."*

After several days walking through Croatia, they reached the Slovenian border. At around 4:30 am on April 21st, they group crossed over to the Slovenian side and continued walking until around 6:30 pm. At that time, they were around 12 km away from the city of Ribinica.

*"We want to cross the city at dawn, we want reduce the risk that police catch us."*

They decided to sleep in the forest until 1:00 am (March 22nd) and continue their walk after. At 5:00 am, they reached the bus station of Ribinica and bought tickets to Ljubljana. They went in pairs and in intervals of 1.5 hours, to stay undetected.

Since the shops and cafes were closed in the city at this time, the group returned to the forest to hide while waiting for the bus. At around 7:30 am, a police car passed by, and stopped a little further, waiting for their reaction. Some minutes later, a police man and a police woman walked up to the group. The officers asked for their passports and when the individuals explained that they did not have any, the officers asked for their reason being in Slovenia.

*"I said we are refugees we want to take a bus to Ljubljana, and they said because of this we need to go to the police station."*

At the police station, the individuals were interrogated with the help of an Arabic translator. They were asked for their names, nationalities, ages and also for their reasons to have left their home countries and how much it had cost them in total to get to Slovenia. After the interrogation, the group was taken to the jail.

*"We stay all night with no food."*

The next morning, April 23rd, at around 10:30 am, the officers brought the group to a police van with three other individuals and handed them over to the Croatian authorities. At the border area, the authorities took photos of their faces. Once they were inside Croatia, the group switched to a Croatian police van with three more people on the move inside. They were left in the van for more than an hour in front of the station while the officers went inside with their phones and power banks. When they finally returned, they handed over their belongings which were destroyed. When the respondent asked for the money the Slovenian authorities had previously confiscated, they just answered that they did not have any.

The Croatian officers drove the group for four hours to the Croatian/Bosnian border near Glinica. At 5:00 pm, they were told to get out of the van and walked back three hours to Velika Kladuša.

21/04/2019

## “THEY MAKE ME SIGN A LIE. BUT I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE TO SIGN OR YOU GET BEATEN.”

**Date and time:** April 21, 2019 11:00

**Location:** Novo Mesto, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.8021445, 15.1607305

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 22-29 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, reckless driving, pushing into river

**Police involved:** 4 Slovenian policemen in two vehicles (1 big white van and 1 car), later 1 more big white van. - One police station in Slovenia (especially mentioned one police officer who took the interview with a translator). - 3 Croatian police officers with sky blue uniforms. - 6 men and 2 women in black uniforms with ski masks (in Croatia). - White van with big blue letters on both sides saying “POLICIJA” in Croatia.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed

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

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

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of 7 people were apprehended at around 11:00 am on April 21st at the Novo Mesto bus station, Slovenia. They were waiting for the bus to go to Ljubljana. They had already bought their bus tickets, and the respondent still had his ticket at the time of the interview:

Two police cars stopped where the seven men were standing. According to the respondent, there was one large and one small vehicle with two policemen in each car.

*“One car for police and one car for refugees”.*

The four policemen asked them for papers and the respondent answered them:

*“No have documents, I am immigrant”.*

The police frisked them. While they were being checked one-by-one, they expressed the intention to seek asylum but the officers did not answer them. When the police finished their search, they brought them to the large vehicle, which was described as a large white van.

*“We went there for the police procedure.”*

The respondent described the journey in the van:

*"The driving was so bad. I vomit two times."*

He explained that not only he had to vomit, but also two of his friends. He said that the policemen turned on the air conditioner, switching it from a very low temperature to the highest heat. The driver was also changing the speed of the car constantly, so that the seven men in the backspace were mixed up among each other and were smashed against the walls of the car.

After twenty minutes of driving, they arrived to a police station in an unknown village. The police officers who were driving the car asked them to put their personal belongings in a bag which they labelled with their names. Thereafter, they asked the seven men to take off their clothes in one room and then brought them into metal-barred "rooms", putting two people in each room.

*"They ask us to take our clothes. We end only in boxer and small t-shirt and they put us in jail."*

They waited there for 20 minutes until one police officer started to call them one-by-one to proceed with an interview.

When the respondent was called for the interview, there was a table between the police officer and him. An Arabic translator was next to the policeman. The translator asked the respondent which route his group had taken before they were apprehended. The respondent had to point out the route on a map on the computer. The policeman took the fingerprint from his right index finger and also took pictures of his face.

The respondent again expressed to the police officer that he wanted to seek asylum in Slovenia. The police officer answered him that he only has economical reasons to leave his country and was not permitted to ask for asylum in Slovenia:

*"The problem of Algeria is economic, no asylum. You will be returned to Bosnia."*

When the police officer finished the interview, he told him to sign some papers, translated in English and Arabic.

*"They make me sign a lie. But I know that you have to sign them or you get beaten."*

When he said to the police officer that what was written in the papers was not true, the answer of the police officer was:

*"Shut up and sign!"*

Another policeman entered the room and brought him back in the jail and he waited there until all of the group had been interviewed. When the policemen finished the interviews, they brought the group back in the room where all their clothes were, so that they could put them back on.

They were then taken into a big white van, and a ride of approximately 15 minutes followed. The driving was described as "normal". At the border between Slovenia and Croatia, the Slovenian officers handed the group over to Croatian authorities who then took them into another van. Then, they stopped in Karlovac (HRV) at around 10:00 pm. The respondent saw three policemen in a "sky blue" uniform, wearing caps on their heads. When the group got out of the car, these 3

policemen told them “Welcome” and made them get into another large white vehicle with big blue letters on both sides saying “POLICIJA”.

They drove about two hours. The interviewee said that the driver put the air-conditioner really high and he was constantly changing the speed of the car to make them collide between one another and smash against the walls of the car. Some of the group members started to vomit. Recalling this treatment, the respondent expressed his frustration:

*“Police border is big big big problem!”*

Around midnight the car stopped next to the Glina river which marked the border between Croatia and Bosnia. When the door of the van was opened, the respondent saw 8 police officers in front of him (6 male and 2 female) wearing totally black uniforms and ski masks.

The police officers grabbed them by their jackets and forced them to get out of the car. At this point, they started to beat them with batons while they were shouting:

*“Go river, don’t cross the border again!”*

Some of the group members were kicked into the river.

**17/04/2019**

## **“WE SAID ‘ASYL ASYL’, BUT THE POLICE SAID ‘NO ASYL, NO ASYL, CAMP IS FULL!’”**

**Date and time:** April 17, 2019 09:00

**Location:** Rupa, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.4874167, 14.2775503

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 17-30 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Apprehended by 15 Slovenian police officers (two of them female) in blue uniforms, with an emblem containing the flag of Slovenia on their sleeves, batons, six vehicles and dogs. - Unknown number of Slovenian officers in the police station. - 5 Croatian police officers (among them one woman) in darkblue uniforms, with emblems containing the Croatian flag and white and yellow colors on their sleeves, and with caps with 4 or 5 stars on them. 1 Volkswagen A6, 1 small Mercedes van (white with no inscriptions) and 1 big Mercedes van (white with no inscriptions).

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of six started their journey in Velika Kladuša (BiH) on Friday 5th April 2019. They managed to cross Croatia without being detected by the Croatian authorities. After ten days of walking, they reached the border between Croatia and Slovenia.

They continued to walk in Slovenia, however after some 20 kilometers into Slovenia they were caught by the police. The location was in the forest near Mrše (SLN), around the coordinates 45.5865972, 14.0331938. There were 15 police officers (two of them female) who arrived by six cars. The officers were wearing blue uniforms, and on their sleeves there was an emblem containing the flag of Slovenia. They had dogs with them and were armed with batons but had no guns. It was 16th April around 6 p.m.

The police told the six men to hand over their phones. Still in the forest, the police checked the phones and then returned them to their owners. They also offered water, crisps and a cigarette to the six men. The six men were then told to get into the backspace of a van. There were no windows, and it was cold in the van.

After an estimated 40 minutes of driving, they reached a police station in an unknown location in Slovenia. The police took their fingerprints and took pictures of the six men.

*"We said 'asyl asyl', but the police said 'no asyl, no asyl, camp is full!'"*

The six men were given food and water and got a blanket for the night. They spent one night in the police station.

The next morning (17<sup>th</sup> April), the group of six was again taken to a van which transported them to the official border crossing between Jelšane (SLN) and Rupa (HR) at the coordinates 45.489552, 14.2778407. They arrived to the border crossing around 8 or 9 a.m. The Slovenian police handed the six men over to five Croatian police officers (among them one woman).

The Croatian officers were wearing darkblue uniforms. On their sleeves, there were emblems containing the Croatian flag and white and yellow colors. The officers were also wearing caps with 4 or 5 stars on them. The Croatian officers had two cars with them: one Volkswagen A6 and one small Mercedes van which was white and had no inscriptions.

The policewoman pointed at the six men with her gun, and they were brought to a building on the Croatian side of the border crossing. The lower part of the building was white, the upper part was blue, and there was a Croatian flag on it. The respondents recognised the building on Googlemaps (coordinates 45.4874167, 14.2775503):

Inside this building, the men had to fully undress. The officers took the men's clothes, their shoes, their jewelry and their watches. The men had to stay totally naked for an estimated four minutes until they were returned their clothes.

The men then had to write their name on a paper and to hold it in front of their chest. The officers photographed them in this position.

When the youngest member of the group – a minor of 17 years – was asked if he speaks English, he said no. As a reaction, one of the police officers slapped him into his face.

The police officers took the men's backpacks and sleeping bags, their money (ca. 1200 Euros in total), their phones (5 phones, among which one Samsung Galaxy S7J, one Samsung Galaxy S3 and one Huawei) and the powerbank they had.

When the officers started to crush the five phones in front of them, one of the migrants reached out and tried to take his phone back. But a police officer hit him with a baton on his fingers and kicked him on his ankle. At the time of the interview, i.e. four days after the incident, his index was heavily swollen as the following picture shows. The index was also causing a lot of pain, and the man reported that he had difficulties to find sleep due to the pain:

The policemen then continued to crush all five phones of the group.

After a while, the men were told to leave the border station and to get into the backspace of a big van. It was a white Mercedes without an inscription on it. Inside the van, it was very cold. There were narrow benches, but no seatbelts. One of the men had to vomit. The men asked the police officers to stop, but they did not react.

The van finally stopped on a small road in the forest. The respondents located the place to have been in the area of Bojna (HR) around the coordinates 45.1883599, 16.0377613. It was in the early afternoon of 17th April. The police officers told the men to get out of the van. They did not return the six men's belongings (backpacks, sleeping bags, money). The men were told to take off their t-shirts and their shoes and to walk back to Bosnia just wearing their trousers. Only the person with the injured finger was spared from this, and he could keep his shirt and his shoes. The officers then shouted at them:

*"No Europe, no Croatia, no Italy! Go, fuck you!"*

The officers hit them with a baton into their legs. One of the men was hit on his head.

The men walked towards Velika Kladuša. Without shoes and shirts, they were very cold. After a while, they met a Bosnian man who gave them shoes and water. After some 20 kilometers of walking, they reached Velika Kladuša in the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

**16/04/2019**

## **"THIS IS MENTAL TORTURE!"**

**Date and time:** April 16, 2019 10:30

**Location:** Breznik, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.2247, 15.9628

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 22-48 , from: Pakistan, India

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, electric shock, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, pointing at people with guns, reckless driving, repeatedly abrupt stopping, causing vomiting

**Police involved:** first attempt: some Bosnian officers, number unknown. Second attempt: 3 Slovenian officers in camouflage uniform with balaclavas and three dogs, carrying big machine guns with red colored laser pointers on the rifle, carrying also knives and pistols on their belts. They had extra bags on their thighs and large boots. Afterwards seven Croatian officers in dark blue uniforms. In the end eight police officers with balaclavas, batons, guns and electric shockers.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of nine started moving in the afternoon on April 4, 2019, from Bihać towards the Croatian border. When they made a little break on the way, some Bosnian officers came towards them, insulting them and kicking their water bottles away. They forced them to go return to Bihać.

Despite this incident, the group went on game again early in the morning at 5 am on April 6.

After six days they ran out of food and started drinking only water. On April 12, they finally they reached the Kupa river at the Slovenian-Croatian border. They describe it as a very dangerous river, but when they walked inside this time, the water only reached their necks

*"I know that many people died in this river. Too many people died, I know from five persons in the last months. There is never anything about that in the news, they are refugee people, who cares? They think we are animals."*

After the nine of them crossed the river successfully, they continued walking through the Slovenian forests for three days. When they were sleeping in the forest early in the morning on April 15, three Slovenian police officers in camouflage uniform with balaclavas and three dogs came and started to kick them with their feet, shouting:

*"Police! Wake up! Put your hands up!"*

They carried big guns with red colored laser pointers on the end, which they pointed directly on the chests of the individuals, threatening them to shoot. They also carried knives with them and pistols on their belts, and extra bags on their thighs and large boots.

The officers walked with the people on the move for three hours to the next road and then drove them with a car back to the Slovenian/Croatian border. Once arrived there, they handed them over to seven Croatian police officers in dark blue uniforms.

They brought them into a room, not in a police station, where they detained them for some time. Although the individuals asked for food, they didn't get any. They took neither any photos nor fingerprints, and didn't make them sign any papers. What they took though were all their belongings, such as phones, money, power banks, after having searched them, even their underwear. One officer put everything in a

bag and went to a wagon car. He placed the bag in the door and smashed the car's door five times strongly on the bag and destroyed everything inside.

The respondent described the procedure, saying:

*"This is mental torture!"*

After they had asked them where they came from, and the individuals explained that they came from Bihać, they brought them to a border point close to Velika Kladuša. On the way to the Croatian/Bosnian border, they stopped at one point and another individual on the move entered the van, so they were now altogether 10 people. They were driven fast for four hours on mountain roads, from time to time stopping abruptly so that the individuals hit the walls and each other. Some people threw up from this.

*"After 10 days of walking, with only a little bit of bread and water, how do you look like? And then they put you with 20 other persons in a small car. This is too much."*

*"Three days ago [April 14], our friends were pushed back by Croatian police. They were 22 people in the car, in a small van for two days, cold, no food, no possibility to sit, to sleep, they said: "Sorry we need go to toilet for washing, we are hungry, we need doctor", but no, when we asked, too much shouting, and they locked the door of the car. It's like torture."*

When they reached the Croatian/Bosnian border, the car stopped and the police officers shouted:

*"Out!"*

*"If you go quick out and run, then you are safe but if you fall down, they beat and kick you so long, till you cross the border."*

There were about eight police officers described as wearing balaclavas, batons, with guns and electric shockers standing in two rows, who forced them to walk towards the border. They beat all of them.

*"They only beat you on the body, they know, they don't want that there are visible scars or black and blue marks."*

Afterwards, they followed them for 30 minutes until they crossed the Bosnian border and the ten of them ran away quickly.

It was 10.30 am on April 16 when they arrived at the border. They walked about five hours to Velika Kladuša and reached Bihać after 15 hours at 2 am the next morning.

*"When we were at the Slovenia/Croatian border, they just told us to go back and even gave us the bag with our stuff back. But the Croatian/Bosnian border is not good. So much torture."*

**Coordinates of Capture:** 45.5131, 15.1114

16/04/2019

## “THE VAN WAS COMPLETELY DIRTY INSIDE, THERE WAS STILL THE VOMIT OF THE LAST ‘PASSENGERS’.”

**Date and time:** April 16, 2019 10:00

**Location:** Dalnje Njive, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.4248188, 15.1581189

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: 28-35 years old , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** insulting, exposure to jerky style of driving and bad air quality, causing sickness, mixing personal belongings of numerous migrants

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian officers in army camouflage suits and 3 Slovenian officers in darkblue uniforms with a white van with a blue inscription “Policija”. Later 2 other vans in Slovenia. – Several Slovenian guards in a “detention center” (some in police uniforms, others in plain clothes). – Several Croatian officers in darkblue uniforms at several places in Croatia. Two different vans in Croatia.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

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

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of four men started their journey on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April from Sturlic (BiH). Around midnight, they crossed the border to Croatia.

After three nights and one day of walking, they arrived to the Croatian-Slovenian border in the early morning of 16<sup>th</sup> April. At 4 a.m., they made their first attempt to cross the border river (Kolpa). However, the current was too strong and they had to turn around. By 10 a.m., they found another place to cross the river. It was west of Severin na Kupi (HR). The respondent was the second man of the group to cross. One of his friends was already on the Slovenian side, the two others were waiting on the Croatian side. However, when he had reached the middle of the river, three officers appeared on the Slovenian side (45.4248188, 15.1581189). The respondent decided to continue to the Slovenian side so as not to leave his friend alone.

The three officers came down the hill through the forest. Two of them were wearing army camouflage suits, the third one had a darkblue uniform. They pulled their heavy guns and pointed at the two Iranian men. One of the Slovenian officers then made a call, and after a short while the Croatian police arrived to the other side of the river and apprehended the two men who were still there. The respondent said that his friends told him later that the Croatian police destroyed their sleeping bags and their shoes and then pushed them back to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The two men on the Slovenian side of the river were all wet after crossing the river. They asked the Slovenian officers to change their clothes but the officers refused that. Instead, they made

a call, and one more officer in a darkblue uniform arrived. The officers then told them to get into the backspace of their van. It was a small white van with a blue inscription "Policija" on it. The two men in the camouflage suits left by another vehicle, and the two officers in darkblue uniforms drove the van.

There were seats in the backspace of the van, but no seatbelts.

*"There were no windows, there wasn't even enough oxygen".*

The respondent fainted at times, had to vomit and fell down on the van's floor several times during the transport. His friend tried to make the policemen stop the van by knocking and kicking on the walls, but the policemen did not react.

After an estimated 40 minutes of driving, the van stopped at a police station. The two policemen took them into the police station. The respondent told them:

*"I want to have asylum, I need to be in a safe country."*

But the policemen replied, in a friendly way:

*"No, it's not possible, our law does not give us the authority to do that."*

The policemen then took the two men's backpacks and the only phone they had with them. The two people on the move did not have money with them. The two policemen interrogated the respondent but not his friend. The respondent did not know why only he was interrogated. They took his fingerprints and took pictures of him. Moreover, he had to sign papers which were in Slovenian language. The policemen did not explain him what was the content of the papers, and the man did not ask them because he believed that it was not important. The policemen gave them food and water.

They spent an estimated two hours in the police station. They still had to wear the clothes with which they had crossed the river, but little by little they were drying. Then they had to get into another van. This van had windows. One of the two policemen from the apprehension site was also in the van, plus one other policeman who was also wearing a darkblue uniform.

After some three hours of driving, they arrived in what the respondent called a "detention center".

*"I do not know why they took us there."*

Some of the staff there were wearing police uniforms, others were wearing plain clothes. The two men were searched and then given a cell with two beds. The toilet was in the same room as the beds. The staff brought them dinner, but after that

*"nobody came to see us, it was like in a jail."*

They spent one night in the "detention center". The next morning (17<sup>th</sup> April), the staff arrived around 7 a.m. and told them to get into another van. Two other migrants were already inside the van. In this van, there was enough oxygen and there was light.

After an estimated three hours of driving, they arrived to the Slovenian-Croatian border. There was only a small road and no buildings except a small border station. The Slovenian officers handed the migrants' backpacks and their phone over to the Croatian officers at the border. The officers talked to each other for an estimated five minutes.

The Croatian officers who were wearing darkblue uniforms then brought the two men and also the two other migrants from the van to a police station at the Croatian side of the border. There, the migrants and their luggage were searched again which took an estimated ten minutes. The officers kicked the migrants' backpacks around, and they said things to the migrants in Croatian which they did not understand exactly but which were obviously insults. The men had to sign one paper whose content they did not understand. The officers also took pictures of the men holding a paper with a number in front of their chest.

The four migrants then had to enter another van.

*"It was completely dirty inside, there was still the vomit of the last 'passengers'."*

After 40 minutes of driving in the dirty van, they arrived to a big police station where they had to change the van. There were already many other migrants, and all of them were apportioned to three big vans for deportation. In the respondent's van, there were 14 men which meant that the van was very packed. Two persons even had to sit on the floor. After 30 minutes, the van stopped, and a woman who spoke Arabic had to board the van so there were now fifteen persons inside.

*"The driver was driving in a very bad way, he obviously wanted to bowl and bother us. He was suddenly braking, then speeding up very fast, and he made many curves. If somebody transported sheep, he would not drive in such a bad way! The driver treated us worse than sheep."*

Many people had to vomit, and they were vomiting on each other because there was so little space. The quality of the air was very bad. There were two fans on the ceiling, but they were working only for ten minutes or so during every thirty minutes. Particularly the Arabic woman had difficulties with breathing, and she tried to tell the driver to stop but nothing happened.

*"The woman was standing in the middle of the driving van so that she would be as close as possible to the fan at the ceiling. I felt so bad to look at this!"*

After some four hours of driving like this, the van stopped. The location was on a small road near Katinovac (HR), approximately at the coordinates 45.2302024, 15.9221061. The two other big vans from the big police station were not there. Neither were there any Bosnian officials.

The Croatian policemen had put the belongings of the fifteen people into a single big bag which they handed over to one of the migrants now.

*"They did this to cause a fight among us."*

Indeed, the man with the bag tried to run away with all the belongings. The others caught him soon, but he managed to run away again and to take half of the stuff with him. Then a fight about the rest of the belongings started among the remaining fourteen people.

*"The Croatian police watched us from aside and laughed, as if they were watching a funny movie."*

From the pushback location, it was more than 20 kilometers to Velika Kladuša which the respondent and his friend had to walk without food, water and energy. They arrived to Velika Kladuša late on 17<sup>th</sup> April.

At the end of the interview, the respondent added:

*"I do not understand this: On the one hand, the EU says they want to fight smugglers. But at the same time, they close the borders which gives work for smugglers. They should do interviews with us here to find out who has the right to asylum!"*

*I have already had a very long journey. It has been a very bad experience. I just want to go to a safe place, but everywhere it is dangerous for us. I really don't know what will happen to me in the end of my journey."*

08/04/2019

## "GO TO MUSLIM PLACES LIKE BOSNIA OR ABU DHABI."

**Date and time:** April 8, 2019 10:00

**Location:** Sredisce ob Dravi, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 46.3891853, 16.2765728

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 23, 24 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** At first 2 Slovenian officers, dressed in uniform, in an unofficial car. Later joined by 2 police cars with 4 more officers, one of them Croatian. More officers at the Slovenian and Croatian police stations and on transports in Croatia. 2 police vans in Slovenia and 1 police van in Croatia.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, exodus route information taken

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Two Algerians, a 24-year-old woman and a 23-year-old man, started their journey on Thursday, April 4, 2019. They crossed the border into Croatia by foot west of Livno (BiH). After two nights of walking, they reached Sinj (CRO) from where they continued by bus to Split and Zagreb. Both of them stayed one night in Zagreb and took a bus to Varazdin (CRO) on the evening of April 7. They left Varazdin that same night

by foot, crossed the border into Slovenia and arrived in Sredisce ob Dravi (SLN) the next morning on April 8.

They were waiting at the train station of Sredisce to take a train to Ljubljana. Around 10 am, an unofficial brown-beige car drove towards them. Two officers stepped out, wearing either black or dark blue uniforms and carrying small guns on their belts. The respondent remembered to have seen the following two emblems on the policemen's uniforms:

The two officers approached the two people on the move and asked for their documents.

*"We don't have any papers."*

The police then asked them to empty their pockets. They kept asking how they got to Sredisce, how they crossed the fence, why they took this route, if there were any other people on the move and which final destination they were heading for. The respondents had the impression that the officers assumed that they had gotten to Sredisce with the help of a smuggler. They denied this and tried to keep the route they took a secret to make sure other people on the move wouldn't get caught. After hours of questioning, they eventually told the officers how they made it from Bosnia to Sredisce.

After a short while, one other police car and one police van arrived. Both vehicles were white and had the inscription 'POLICIJA'. Three male and one female officer stepped out. One of them talked to the two individuals in German and informed them that he was Croatian police, and the Slovenian officers confirmed that the Croatian and Slovenian police forces were working together on border control.

The individuals had to enter the back of the van which seats and the police drove them to the fence on the Slovenian-Croatian border. They were asked to show where they had crossed, and the respondents showed them the spot.

At that point, they also asked for asylum, but the police refused to consider this request. Instead, they told them they should ask for a visa in their home country or ask for asylum at the official border crossing. The Croatian officer told them that they were now in a Christian country and that there was no place for Muslim people in Europe.

*"Go to Muslim places like Bosnia or Abu Dhabi."*

The two people on the move were then taken to the official border crossing at the coordinates 46.3870172, 16.3027547. They waited in the back of the van for around half an hour, assuming they would get pushed back straight away, but were instead driven back into Slovenia without any explanation. After 15 minutes, they reached what the respondent described as a "Slovenian police station." Using Google Streetview, he displayed the building as the one below in Ormoz (SLN) at the coordinates 46.410048, 16.149226:

Once inside, their bags and bodies were checked thoroughly and a list of their belongings was made. Finger prints of one finger each were taken, and also a photo of their faces. They had to provide their names, birth dates and addresses in their home country. The police checked their phones and also wrote down their phone numbers. All their belongings were kept by the officers, but finally returned during the pushback.

The officers asked them again for detailed information about the journey from Algeria to Slovenia. They finally informed the officers about the exact route they took from Bosnia, which they had been intending to keep secret at first. An Arabic translator was present.

During the interrogation, the two individuals asked for asylum again. They stressed that they were not safe in Algeria and needed asylum. But again they were told that it was not possible for Algerians to request asylum. The officers apologized, claiming it was not in their power to give them asylum. Instead, they had to execute the political decision to push people back.

The two individuals were given a shared cell with one bed, and they also got lunch and dinner. They spent the entire day and night in the police station.

On Tuesday morning, April 9, the two of them were told to leave the cell and to enter a van. They were driven to the official border crossing between Sredisce (SLN) and Trnovec (CRO) at the coordinates 46.3870272,16.3024734. There, their personal belongings were handed over to the Croatian authorities, and they had to switch to a Croatian police van without seats.

In a 20-minute-drive, they were taken to a police station in Strivago (CRO). They were told to fill in a form with their personal information, i.e. their names, parents' names, birth date, birth place, languages and other. The officers checked their phones and again wrote down their phone numbers and did body checks whereby the woman was checked by a police woman, the man by a police man. The individuals then had to enter the van again where they waited for around an hour while their bags were checked outside the van. The officers asked them if they wanted food and took the money they had found in their pockets to buy it for them.

At 12 am, the van drove off towards Bosnia and the driver switched somewhere along the road. There was a big light in the van, but no daylight or opportunity to see where they were driving. The last hour of the drive was on an unpaved path. The van being without seats, the two individuals had to spend the four-hour drive sitting on the van's floor and the woman started to feel somewhat sick but didn't have to vomit.

When they reached the destination around 4 pm, the pair had to leave the van. There were at least four other police vans and around 15 other people on the move from Pakistan arriving at the same time. The Pakistanis told the respondent that they had also been pushed back from Slovenia and also hadn't experienced any violence. The officers returned the personal belongings to the individuals, i.e. the bags, phones and money, and told them to leave. According to the respondent, the Pakistanis also got their phones back.

They were dropped right at the border outside Kobiljak (CRO) at the coordinates 45.1799117, 16.051078, around 20 km from Velika Kladusa (BiH).

The group walked to the closest paved road and hitchhiked to Otoka (BiH), from where they took the train back to Sarajevo.

08/04/2019

**“A POLICEMAN SAID ‘AH, MAMA AND PAPA!’, TOOK HIS BATON AND STRUCK HIM ONCE ON HIS HEAD. OUR FRIEND WENT DOWN IMMEDIATELY.”**

**Date and time:** April 8, 2019 05:00

**Location:** Novo Mesto, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.801168, 15.170676

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 25-34 , from: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 Slovenian officers, wearing dark blue uniforms; Unknown number of Slovenian officers at a police station; 1 Slovenian officer in a military suit and several Slovenian officers in grey-green uniforms in a “closed camp”; 6 Croatian officers who were wearing ski masks, caps and dark blue uniforms with the Croatian flag on their sleeves. 1 yellow car resembling an ambulance car, 1 grey Audi with blue light, 1 more van in Slovenia and 1 van in Croatia.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of food/water, spending nights undressed

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five men started their journey around April 3, 2019, in Velika Kladusa (BiH). They crossed the border to Croatia by foot. After three days of walking in Croatia, they reached the Croatian-Slovenian border near Stankovci (HR). They crossed the border river Kolpa around 4 am at a spot where it was several dozen meters wide, the water almost reaching their necks. They were holding each other's hands, but one of them lost grip, was carried away a few meters downstream, but managed to swim to the Slovenian riverbank.

Once they had crossed the river, they continued walking in Slovenia. Their route led them through the forest, and they saw a bear and a wolf on their way. After one day walking in Slovenia, being the fourth day of their journey, they ran out of food and water. They were in the area of Novo Mesto (SLN) and decided to take the risk and to enter the town. There they hoped to find a car or a bus that could take them to Ljubljana.

Around 5 am the next day, they were walking on the Kandijska Cesta street in Novo Mesto at the coordinates 45.801168, 15.170676, when a yellow car stopped next to them and two officers stepped out. The respondents mentioned, that the car was not **recognizable** as a police car and rather looked like

an ambulance car. The officers wore dark blue uniforms, carried batons and guns and pointed with them at the group of five, shouting:

*“Stop!”*

When the people on the move stopped, the officers made a call and within minutes another police car, a gray Audi, arrived with its siren turned on. Two more officers got off the second car, wearing the same uniforms and arms as the first two.

*“I hear that normally in Europe police is good, with respect. Slovenia is European Union but police had no respect!”*

The officers asked them for their documents, but they didn't have any. The police then asked:

*“Why are you here?”*

One of the individuals answered:

*“Asyl.”*

And the officer answered:

*“No asyl, no asyl!”*

The officer didn't react, when the individual asked:

*“Why no asyl?”*

Instead, he told them first to kneel down and then to lie down on their stomach on the pavement in the middle of the town. The five of them had to hold their hands behind their heads. Then the officers started kicking them and beat them with their batons. The violence lasted several minutes, one of the respondents estimated it to have been around 15 minutes. All of this happened on the street in the middle of the town. There were passers-by who stopped and looked at them, and according to the respondents, the police said:

*“Look Arab, look Arab.”*

Both, the officers and the passers-by, laughed while they were being beaten.

Afterwards, the officers made the five of them enter the windowless backspace of the van. The space was very small for five persons with a slim bench to sit, but no seat belts. It was very cold in the van, and there was no fresh air. The driver drove fast and in many curves:

*“The driver had no respect.”*

All five individuals had to vomit, and several times one of them fell on the floor. They shouted and asked to stop the car, but the officers didn't react.

After an estimated one-hour drive, the van stopped at a police station at an unknown location. Inside, they had to write their name on a paper and to hold it in front of their chest while the officers took photos. They also had to sign five papers each, all in English. The migrants were not given copies of these

papers, but could remember some details of the contents: On some papers, they had to confirm the information they had given about their names, their countries of origin, their migration route and more. Another paper stated a fine of 450 Euros per person for their irregular entry into Slovenia.

The officers took their phones, eight in total, their money, around 1500 Euros in total, and their luggage. They were also told to take off all their clothes beside their underwear, and had to spend the whole night like this, freezing.

On next morning, i.e. the sixth day of their journey, they got back their clothes and were told to enter a van. After an estimated five-hours drive, they stopped in what the respondents called a “closed camp”. They suppose this camp to have been in the region of Vinica (SLN), near to the Slovenian-Croatian border and the distance to the police station to have been much less than a five hours of driving and that the driver may have driven detours.

The respondents estimated that there were around 30 other persons in this “closed camp”, all of them people on the move from different countries, i.e. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt. There were also women and children among them.

One person of the “closed camp's” staff was wearing a military suit, the others wore uniforms in gray and green colors. The respondents referred to them as “guards”.

The staff interrogated the group, they again had to tell their names, age and country of origin. There was a translator present who was Palestinian. The respondents mention, that the translator played a dubious role, and they had the impression that the translator faked parts of the conversation.

The staff also asked them why they came to Slovenia.

*“I say I come to Slovenia because I need asyl.”*

The staff then asked what his problem in his country, Algeria, is.

*“I work for police in Algeria for four years, from 2015 to 2018. Therefore, I have problem with Daesh in my country. I need asyl. No economic asyl, but political asyl.”*

The staff then asked him about his migration route from Turkey to Slovenia, and he answered correctly. They then asked him whether he had been registered in Greece and Montenegro, and he told that his fingerprints were taken in Greece.

*“But I did not have proper asyl in Greece, only a registration for staying.”*

In the “closed camp”, the group of five was brought to a shared cell with a toilet bowl, but neither beds nor mattresses, just a carpet on the floor. They got a thin blanket for the night and had to undress again. This time they were allowed to wear a t-shirt and their underwear. They got pasta to eat, and just a few minutes after eating all of them fell asleep. The respondents believe there might have been some drugs in the food which made them sleep.

The following day, i.e. the seventh day of their journey, around April 10, the Slovenian authorities took them by van to a border station where they arrived around 1 pm. The respondents located the border crossing on the bridge between Vinica (SLN) and Pribanjski (HRV) at the coordinates 45.4564781, 15.2485685. The Slovenian authorities talked to some Croatian police officers. They still had the group's

money, € 1500, and the phones in a bag which they handed over to the Croatian officers together with their luggage.

The Croatian officers told the group to enter another van. The individuals asked for water, but the officers just said:

*"No water."*

During the following three to four-hour drive, all of them got sick again.

*"It was very cold inside the van, all of us got sick and vomited."*

Around 4 pm, the van stopped on a small road in the forest at the Croatian-Bosnian border, supposedly in the area of Gejkovac (HR). There were six officers, wearing ski masks, caps and dark blue uniforms with an emblem of the Croatian flag on their sleeves. The people on the move asked for their money and phones, but the officers refused. Instead, they took the eight phones and destroyed their charging sockets with a stick.

*"One of us said many times 'give me my phone because there are photos of my mama and papa, the photos are my souvenirs'. One policeman said 'Ah, mama and papa!', took his baton and struck him once on his head. Our friend went down immediately. The policemen then told the other four of us 'Take your friend, go Bosnia!'"*

The four of them did as they were told. They had to carry their friend as he was only partially conscious. In the evening around April 10, they reached Velika Kladuša.

By the time of the interview, some ten days after the incident, the man who had been struck on the right side of his head wasn't able to properly move his left arm and fingers and his left leg. He was limping, not able to straighten the fingers of his left hand, and he was not able to lift his left arm higher than his chest. He also suffered from headache and needed painkillers and his friends said that he had also some loss of memory. His friends and he himself confirmed that he had not had similar difficulties before he was hit during the push-back. He was concerned that he would not be able to find work due to these handicaps.

The following photo, taken on April 20, shows his left hand. He was not able to straighten his fingers any more than this:

The following picture shows the dent on his head where he had been struck:

On April 20, the man was able to see a doctor at the university clinic of Sarajevo who conducted a computer tomography. Three doctors, one of them a neurosurgeon, gave their written opinions (see photos of the reports written in Bosnian). All doctors stated that there was an injury with a contusion on the right side of the head, caused by a hit with an unknown object. At the same place they found a scar from a previous cranium operation. The cranium thus showed the state after an osteoplastic craniotomy and a resorptive post contusion field. One doctor states that a post trauma may have been caused by the hit. The neurosurgeon did not find an indication for neurosurgical treatment.

30/03/2019

**“I ASKED FOR A TRANSLATOR AND THEY JUST SAID ‘NO SPEAK, SHUT UP’. THEN I FILLED THE DOCUMENT AND WHEN I WROTE THE REASON WHY I HAD TO LEAVE MY COUNTRY, THEY JUST CROSSED IT OUT.”**

**Date and time:** March 30, 2019 19:00

**Location:** Višnja Gora, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.9579759, 14.7401227

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 27, 33, 43, 45, 45 , from: Palestine, Iran, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 Slovenian police officers in dark blue uniforms with 3 white cars and 1 female officer with a white van. - Unspecified number of Slovenian staff in a "prison". - Unspecified number of Croatian police officers in Croatian police station. - 10 Croatian police officers in blue uniforms and ski masks

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present, forced to pay fee

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five men left Velika Kladuša (BiH) on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, at around 5:00 am and later reached the border with Croatia.

*“We walked into the jungle. It was a mountainous area. From where we were, we saw a white jeep and two military officers with green uniforms and binoculars on a high unpaved track. We hid for an hour in the vegetation.”*

When the officers left, the group continued their journey. They walked until midnight and slept in the region of Karlovač.

At around 6:00 am the next day, the group proceeded to walk through Croatia towards Slovenia. They walked the whole day and around midnight they crossed the Croatian-Slovenia border. They walked for two more days into the country, at which point their food and water supplies were gone. At approximately 4:00 pm on March 29th, they reached the city of Višnja Gora (SLN) and headed towards the train station.

*“I asked for a ticket to Ljubljana and the man in the station told me that there were no more tickets. One minute later he said ‘wait, I’m gonna see if I can get you one’. After ten minutes, the police arrived to the station”.*

The respondent saw three white police cars arrive to the train station, carrying altogether six police men in dark blue uniforms. They asked the group to sit down. Each man was searched and their phones and money were taken.

*"They just asked us to sit down and did a regular search on each of us. They were not violent against us. But later... Later, at the police station it was different".*

A white van driven by a female officer arrived and carried the five men to a police station. The van didn't have windows so the respondent was not able to determine where the police station was located, however recalled that the ride lasted 25 minutes.

In the police station, the five men expressed their intention to seek asylum in Slovenia:

*"I asked for asylum. Usually, when someone asks for asylum they bring him to a camp and start a regular procedure. But here it was not the case. The police told us instead 'no asylum in Slovenia' and then they told us to shut up".*

The group was taken to a small room with a few benches. They asked for water and food and the police brought them some water. Then, each group-members was searched again.

*"They made us take off our clothes and carried out an extensive control. They looked everywhere, even in our holes down there".*

After that, they were brought back to the cell. At approximately 3.30 am, each man was taken individually to a room to fill a document in English. It was not translated, but the respondent understood that he had to fill it with his name, age, country of origin, the reason for leaving it and the reason for being in Slovenia.

*"I asked for a translator and they just said 'no speak, shut up'. Then I filled the document and when I wrote the reason why I had to leave my country, they just crossed it out."*

Then a photo was taken with a camera computer and each man had to give their index fingerprint.

*"Everyone knows that ten fingerprints mean camp, one only means deportation."*

Officers handed them out five papers in English. The respondent asked again for a translator to which the authorities answered *"No speak, shut up"*. The respondent refused to sign the papers and he received an elbow bump on the back of the neck. He still refused to sign them and an officer signed them for him.

After that, he was brought back to the cell and waited around 30 minutes until all the members of the group were back to the cell. One of the five men roughly understood the meaning of the papers: that they were being fined for illegally crossing the border.

*"The police took in total 300 euros from all of us".*

Afterwards, they were taken to a prison with a van and split into 5 cells, one per person, with toilets in it. Officers took their belts and bracelets. They were given a dinner and then they went to sleep.

The following morning, at 9 am, they received another meal and two hours later they were loaded into the same van by which they had arrived the day before. They were driven to the border with Croatia. The ride lasted approximately 40 minutes and the respondent believed that they stopped near the coordinates 45.38053 15.19215.

From there, Croatian officials took them in another white van to the police station in Karlovač. There, a picture of them was taken while they held a paper at chest level with their names, ages, country of origin and a number. They were loaded into the same van again and taken to the Bosnian border. At the estimated coordinates of 45.222414,15.836060, the van stopped and they were told to get off. The van left and 10 policemen appeared from what seemed like "nowhere". The officers wore blue uniforms and ski masks.

The respondent asked for his money and phone back.

*"They told us to shut up and leave. We insisted and they took out their batons. They beat us on our backs when we were leaving. They beat me on the back of my leg, one of my friends on the back and a man from Iran on the knee."*

The five men ran and crossed the Bosnian border, later walking to Velika Kladuša.

29/03/2019

## "THE POLICE, THAT WAS WEARING THE OFFICIAL UNIFORM WITH THE CROATIAN FLAG, CAME AND BEAT HIM ALL OVER THE BODY"

**Date and time:** March 29, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Slovenian-Croatian border

**Coordinates:** 45.69057883928325, 15.502918154384133

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 19 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting

**Police involved:** Croatian police (unspecified number), they were wearing the Croatian flag on their uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

A young man from Afghanistan, 19 years old, reports starting his game in Serbia. He entered a truck there, which would take him to Slovenia in two days. But on March 25, 2019, when he

arrived in Slovenia, the truck stopped and the driver found him, hiding in the truck. The driver instantly called the police. The respondent tried to escape, but the driver stopped him while insulting him. The police, described as wearing the official uniform with the Croatian flag, arrived shortly after at the place where the truck was parked. They beat and kicked him all over his body. Afterwards, he was taken to jail in Croatia in what he described as a white van.

*"I was in a very small room without water and food for one day."*

The police asked him to sign a document, in order to give him food, but he refused to sign.

*"First the food, then I will sign".*

The police refused his demand and didn't hand him out any food. The document was written in English, a language he doesn't understand well. The respondent never had the services of a translator. The police took photos of him but not his fingerprints.

Afterwards, he reports being pushed back to Serbia in a police car, after five days on "the game".

**25/03/2019**

**"THEY OBVIOUSLY WERE TRYING TO BE NOT SEEN, BECAUSE THEY KNEW THAT THEY DO SOMETHING ILLEGAL."**

**Date and time:** March 25, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Korenica, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 44.74307158239444, 15.706314759596694

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 24-37 , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, pepper spray, electric shock, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12 Croatian police officers, some had bald head, one officer with a light beard had a steel chain

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed, no translator present, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of eight people on the move started in Izačić (BIH) around March 15th, 2019. On March 22nd, 2019, they arrived at an old bridge which crosses the Kupa River, marking the Slovenian/Croatian border. These are the coordinates: 45.4785, 14.9101.

The group was hopeful, as they thought everything would be fine once they reached Slovenia. When they saw a steel fence with an open door on the Slovenian side and no police, they walked through. But just 600 meters further, the group encountered five police cars with 10-12 police officers, seeming to already be waiting for them.

They were caught by the Slovenian police and taken in a van to the police station of the city Črnomelj (45.5761, 15.1900) where they were detained for two days.

A Palestinian translator was present. The group had already heard of this individual prior to their journey from others in Velika Kladuša. It was mentioned that this translator came to work in Slovenia, after he apparently had some problems in Israel. They were advised to avoid this translator. Allegedly, he had repeatedly expressed in the past that he "hates Muslims."

During their detention, the translator could only identify the nationalities of the group based to the language they spoke. He didn't translate any of the documents that the eight had to sign. One of which was a fine of around 500 Euros for crossing the border illegally. They also took one fingerprint from the respondent.

The group was denied access to asylum procedure.

One individual from the group who was Syrian was brought to a camp in Ljubljana, the remaining seven had to enter a van. They brought them to a border crossing point at the Slovenian-Croatian border, where the Croatian police were already waiting for them. One person saw that one Slovenian police officer gave all the signed documents to the Croatian police, who then destroyed them immediately. As a consequence, none of the people on the move got a copy of the papers.

The Croatian police brought the group to "the Garage" in Korenica. This is an informal structure next to Korenica police station at the coordinates 44.7431701, 15.7062677.

*"There was only dirty concrete floor, no toilets, blankets or sponge. We were lying on the cold ground, we were freezing."*

They destroyed their phones with batons, including the chargers. They stole all of their money, their power banks, even cigarettes and food and the glasses of one individual.

The police then made them strip naked and eight to ten police officers started beating and kicking them with their hands, elbows and feet. They further used electric-shockers and a lot of pepper spray. All individuals were crying.

The police seemed concerned that someone would see their outrage, looking over their shoulders several times to make sure, that nobody is watching through the windows on the one side of the garage.

*"They obviously were trying to be not seen, because they knew that they do something illegal."*

When the police was done with their physical assault, they drove them, naked, in a car to a river at the Croatian/Bosnian border approximately 24 km from Velika Kladuša. During the whole trip, they turned down the air-conditioning of the inside of the van, which made them suffer and freeze.

Once they got off the van again, around 12 tall police officers, some with bald heads, some with balaclavas, were waiting in the rain with batons and sticks to beat them up all over again. One police officer was also using an about 1,5 m long steel chain, to beat one individual badly on the head. The individual was bleeding seriously, but somehow still managed to run away.

The police officers finally threw their clothes after the individuals in the rain-slicked grass and forced them to walk through the river to the Bosnian side. From there, they had to walk all the way back to Velika Kladuša.

The interviewee concluded with this statement:

“Croatian police is lying to the European Union when they say they don't beat people, or they don't steal anything. They do illegal push-backs all the time, hurting and humiliating people. Also, some Slovenian police officers cooperate with the Croatian police, to zigzag the law and make illegal push-backs possible.”

**24/03/2019**

## **“THEY DRIVE VERY FAST AND JERKY. WE WERE THROWN BACK AND FORTH INSIDE THE TRUCK ALL THE TIME”**

**Date and time:** March 24, 2019 09:00

**Location:** Vrh pri Fari, Slovenia, along highway 106 close to the Kulpa River

**Coordinates:** 45.48677369138069, 14.900220108394024

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 27, unknown , from: Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Caught by army personnel (1 man and 1 woman with semi-automatic weapons, camouflage color pick up truck) and 8 Slovenian police officers (6 in dark blue uniforms with the Slovenia police badges and Slovenia flags, 2 in plain clothes, 3 police cars, 2 undercover police cars, light green and white color van), at the Slovenian and Croatian police stations and the Croatian border station some officers), deported by the Slovenian light green and white color van and a Croatian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Seven men left Sarajevo on March 15, 2019. They reached the border of Croatia during the day and proceeded to walk through the country for almost 12 days. At approximately 5.30 am on Sunday, March 24, the group reached the Kulpa River at the Slovenian frontier. One man decided to cross the river over a shallower, rocky area that led into a waterfall. The other six men decided to cross downriver from him. They all began to cross at the same time. The respondent led the group of six.

*"The water was up to my chest and I navigated with a large stick."*

The group downriver were about halfway across the river when they heard a scream and saw the man upriver stumble and fall on the rocks. He fell down the waterfall and into the water. He was carrying a blanket and a backpack of clothes and the respondent believes this caused him to submerge very quickly. All the men were screaming, but the man disappeared quickly and the other couldn't do anything for him. The men downriver continued to quickly cross the river and didn't see the other man emerge. They were worried about the police and quietly continued walking uphill, leaving the river behind.

*"We were very tired and wet, and we didn't care anymore after seeing what happened to our friend."*

The group of now six walked through a forest until they reached highway 106.

*"When we reached the street, we felt so tired. We almost couldn't continue and were ready to give up."*

Not long after they started walking on the highway, they were stopped by an army truck around 9 am. The respondent described: "A pick up truck stopped us. It had camouflage colour."

There were two army personnel inside the truck, one man and one woman. They both got off the car "carrying semi-automatic weapons," claimed the respondent.

*"The woman was showing off by pointing the gun at us."*

The army personnel asked if the men had any weapons on them. They denied and the army officers called the police. Soon, three police cars arrived along with two undercover police cars, carrying altogether eight police officers, six in dark blue uniforms with the Slovenia police badges and Slovenia flags, two in plain clothes. The army personnel also called for a van in light green and white color. Each man was searched and their phones and power banks were taken. The men didn't say anything about their friend to the police, because they had heard about another group with a similar case, where the police responded with more violence when they heard about their dead friend.

First, the men were taken with the van to the place at the river to show them, where they crossed it. The police men got off the van to take photos of the crossing point.

Around 11 am, they continued to drive them to a police station about 30 km from the spot where the army had discovered them. The van didn't have windows and they were driven directly into a garage, so the interviewee has no idea where they were taken to. The six men were taken into a large room and given flip-flops, blankets and lunch. There were two bathrooms accessible. The police officer made the interviewee take out his ear piercings and everyone had to hand over their jackets. When they finished their food, each man had to give his fingerprints and name and a photo was taken. One man of the group was acting as a translator and translating from English to Arabic. The police handed out a paper to each of them, that they believed were their asylum papers. They had to sign many papers, thinking all of them were asylum papers. None of papers was translated and no explanation was offered about what they were signing. The man remembered seeing something about the amount of 450 Euro, and he thought this was a fine for illegally crossing the border.

*"We all thought we were getting asylum. One Algerian friend [that was part of the group] who was pushed back from Slovenia before, was very excited, because the police had not registered or fingerprinted him before or given him any papers. The police [of this incident] seemed friendly and said that they would take us to a camp."*

Then the men were given dinner. They were held in the room for around 24 hours and able to sleep during the night.

*"We knew something was wrong when a police officer came to the room in the morning and asked for the blankets and 'asylum papers' back."*

The following morning, on Monday, March 25, around at 9.30/10 am, the men were loaded into the same van they arrived with the day before. After 30 km driving, the car stopped and the men saw through a crack in the van's door, that they had arrived at what looked like a checkpoint or another border area. The police officers left the car. While the men were waiting inside the van around 25 minutes, they could hear the Slovenian police officers speaking with someone else outside. The men were not allowed to go to the bathroom so one man had to urinate in the corner of the van. When the men were let off the van, they could see that they were at the Slovenian-Croatian border checkpoint.

The men were brought into a border station, which was probably at the Croatian side. One police officer, presumably a Croatian one, collected the bags of the men, turned the entire contents out on the floor and stepped on the belongings in order to "search" the bags. One Croatian police women watched this laughing. The men had to sign another paper without translation. Then, each man was given a card with his name. The man believed that the Slovenian police had given their information to the Croatian border police. The officers took pictures of each man holding up the card with their name and other information.

*"The Croatian police officers didn't speak to us at all. We didn't know what's going on."*

Afterwards, they had to enter another van that drove them around two hours to a Croatian police station. There, they waited for 20 minutes before six Pakistani men were also loaded into the van. All the men were driven approximately 2,5 hours to the Bosnian border.

*"They drive very fast and jerky. We were thrown back and forth inside the truck all the time."*

At the end of the drive, later on March 25, the doors were opened and the police returned their phones. The men were dropped off 16 km before Velika Kladuča. It took them two hours to walk back there.

24/03/2019

## “19-YEAR-OLD MOROCCAN DROWNED IN THE BORDER RIVER”

**Date and time:** March 24, 2019 08:00

**Location:** Near Velika Kladuša Municipality, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 45.216209, 15.95516

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 19, rest unknown , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 9 Slovenian (2 in green, rest in blue uniforms) and at least 7 (1 in uniform, rest in civil clothes) Croatian police officers. According to his uniform one Slovenian police officers name is "Emin"

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

From Velika Kladusa, Bosnia-Herzegovina, a group of seven left for 'the game'. After walking through Croatia for ten days, they came near the border with Slovenia undetected. On their eleventh day of walking, at around 5:00 am, they entered Slovenian territory. Near the border of Croatia and Slovenia there is a river that the people on the move had to cross. One of the group, a 19-year-old male, tried to cross the river, but the river grabbed him and he was not able to get out. His friends report that he drowned in the river.

Because they were unable to help their friend, the other group-members decided to continue walking. When they were walking in a road a citizen spotted them. Shortly after this, around 9:00 am, two Slovenian police officers in green uniforms (a man and a woman) stopped the group. The police was carrying what were described as “big” guns. The people on the move were held at gunpoint and told to get down on their knees. The officers made a call to their colleagues, and soon after, two police men described as wearing blue uniforms arrived.

The police officers asked the group how many people they were, to which the group replied that they were with six people in total. The police officers said that they did not believe the group were only six people. At this point, the group-members told the police officers that one of their friends died in the river close by. However, the police officers did not want to listen to this and refused to go to the location that their friend had drowned. During this exchange,

another police officer arrived who told the group to show him where they entered the border of Croatia and Slovenia. The people on the move were put into a police van and were driven to the point where they entered Slovenia. Here, one of them was taken out of the van and the police officer took a picture of him in the area of the border. After he was told to get back into the van and all migrants were driven to the police station in Kočevje, Slovenia.

Inside the police station, the group-members had to stay in a big room with two toilets. They were provided with blankets. In the police station, there was one male officer working on the computer and one female officer doing paperwork. There were two police officers that observed the group-members, both male. One-by-one the group-members were taken out of the big room to have their pictures taken as well as their fingerprints and were asked to give information on how they moved from Bosnia to Slovenia.

During the interview with the officers, there was no official translator present. One of the group-members who spoke English was told to translate for the others. After the interview, the group-members were given five papers which stated that they had to pay a penalty of 500 EUR for illegally crossing the border and were told to sign the papers, which were all in Slovenian. Afterwards the papers were taken back by the police. The questioning took from 10:00 pm until around 2:00 am. After this, the group-members were given food and water and spent the rest of the night in the police station.

Around 08:00-09:00 in the morning, the police told the people on the move to come one by one and get into a car. They were brought to the official border between Croatia and Slovenia. Here they were handed over to the Croatian police, who took pictures of the group with their names in the picture. They were put into another van with Croatian police officers however only one of the police officers was described as wearing a uniform, the others wore civilian clothes. Then they were brought to another police station, in Croatia, where they had to wait for about 40 minutes in the van. There another group, six people from Pakistan, were brought into the van.

From here the van was brought to yet another police station in Croatia, where they waited for about 15 minutes in the van. From here they were brought to the border with Bosnia. They were then pushed back to Bosnia in the woods. There were seven police officers present, all men. The respondent stated that the officers wore blue uniforms and carried firearms with them. One-by-one, the individuals were allowed to leave the van. The police that were present at the pushback gave them a bag with their phones and power banks that has previously been taken from them by the Slovenian police. Then the police told them to go by Bosnia and 'hurry up'.

**23/03/2019**

## **“WHEN THE 19-YEAR-OLD MOROCCAN TRIED TO CROSS IT, HE WAS CARRIED AWAY BY THE RIVER.”**

**Date and time:** March 23, 2019 09:00

**Location:** Fara, Slovenia, near Fara

**Coordinates:** 45.413898610704, 14.900703391227

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 19-28 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** threatening with guns

**Police involved:** 9 Slovenian officers and at least seven Croatian officers. Only one of the officers was wearing a uniform, the others were dressed in civilian clothes.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of seven, two Algerians and five Moroccans, all male, went on game from Velika Kladuša (BIH). After walking through Croatia for 10 days, they arrived close to the Slovenian border. On March 11, 2019, around 5 pm, they entered Slovenia, near Fara. Here there is a river that they had to cross.

When the 19-year-old Moroccan tried to cross it, he was carried away by the river. He couldn't get out anymore and drowned in front of his friend's eyes without them being able to help him.

Shocked by the incident, the group nevertheless decided to continue walking. When they were walking on a road, a member of the public spotted them. Shortly after, around 9.00 pm, two Slovenian officers, a man and a woman, both in green uniforms and carrying big guns, stopped them. The officers pointed with their guns at them and told them to get down on their knees. Then, they made a call and soon after, two other officers in blue uniforms arrived.

The officers asked them with how many people they were traveling.

*"We said we are six people."*

But the officers didn't believe that they were only a group of six. Given this, the people on the move told them of the tragic death of their friend. However, the officers didn't want to listen to this and refused to go to the spot where their friend had died. During the argument, another officer arrived who told the group to show him where they entered the Slovenian border. They had to enter a police van and were driven to the point where they entered Slovenia. Here one of them had to get off the van.

*"The police take a photo of him in the border."*

Afterwards he had to enter the van once more and the group were driven to the police station in Kočevje (SVN).

Inside the police station, the group had to stay in a big room with two toilets and were handed out blankets. There was one male officer working on a computer and one female officer dealing with papers. In addition, two officers were responsible to observing the people on the move.

They requested asylum, but one officer answered:

*"Why don't you make asylum in Bosnia?"*

One by one they brought them out of the big room to take a portrait photo, fingerprints and information on how they moved from Bosnia to Slovenia. During the interviews with the police there was no official translator present. Instead, one of the individuals who spoke English was told to translate for the others. After the interviews which took place from 10 pm till 2 am, the individuals were given five papers that said that they had to pay a penalty fee of €500 for illegally crossing the border. They were forced to sign the papers, which were all written in Slovenian. Afterwards the papers were taken back from the police. Then, they spent the rest of the night in the police station.

*"They gave us food and also water."*

Around 8 to 9 am the next morning, the officers told them to enter a car one by one. They were brought to the official Croatian border. Here they were handed over to the Croatian authorities, who also took photos with their names on it.

The group had to switch to another Croatian police van. Only one of the officers present was wearing a uniform, the others were dressed in civilian clothes. Then they were brought to another police station in Croatia, where they had to wait inside the van. After around 40 minutes, another group of people on the move, six individuals from Pakistan, entered the van.

Then, they left to yet the third Croatian police station, where they had to wait inside the van for about 15 minutes. Finally, they were brought to the Bosnian border and deported into the Bosnian woods. Seven male officers were present, all wearing blue uniforms and carrying weapons. One by one they were allowed to get off the van. The officers gave them a bag with all the phones and power banks that were previously taken from them by the Slovenian police. Then the police told them to go by Bosnia:

*"Hurry up!"*

**18/03/2019**

**"THEY TREATED US LIKE ANIMALS, THEY WERE BEATING US, AND WE WERE LAYING ON THE GROUND."**

**Date and time:** March 18, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Maljvac, Croatia, near Maljvac

**Coordinates:** 45.645862302701566, 15.317366388667892

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 20-34 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 Slovenian officers, 3 Croatian border officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of 10 men from Algeria and Morocco was chain pushed-back from Slovenia to Croatia, then from Croatia to Bosnia.

On March 9, 2019, a group (aged between 20-34) left Velika Kladusa (BIH) and walked to Croatia, close to Maljevac. From there they continued walking day and night towards Slovenia. After nine days, the group crossed the border to Slovenia.

In the morning on March 18, the group crossed the Kupa's river and reached Metlika, exhausted, wet and hungry. At some point a local recognized them, took his phone and called someone. A few minutes later, the group was picked up on the road by six Slovenian officers.

The officers drove the group with a van to the police station of Metlika. Their personal belongings and bags were taken from them. The whole group asked for asylum but the officer answered:

*"You won't stay here!"*

Then they were put in a cell for one hour, before their fingerprints and photos were taken.

Afterwards the group received their personal items back and six officers drove them in a van to the Croatian border where they got handed over to Croatian border officers. The officers asked again for their personal belongings. All phones, IOM Cards and all the money was confiscated and the group had to enter another van. By then all of them haven't had eaten anything for one day and were in the van without knowing where they were going. They asked again for asylum but the police officer pretended not to understand.

After a few hours of driving, at nightfall, the van stopped.

*"It was dark, and they asked us to go out from the van two by two."*

Each time, when two people got off, the doors were closed behind them. The others inside the van could hear the voices and screams of their friends being beaten several times by the officers. This procedure remained the same, two were taken out of the van and three officers were waiting outside to beat them up with batons as the respondent asserted. The individuals couldn't see the officer's faces as they were wearing masks.

*"They treated us like animals, they were beating us, and we were laying on the ground."*

One of the respondents described that while he was laying on the ground, one of the officers took a knife and slit his jacket and trousers (see photo).

Afterwards, one officer gave them a plastic bag with their broken phones inside. He kept around € 100, all cigarettes and the IOM Cards.

They were close to the border, so one officer ordered them to run towards Bosnia, while another one shot in the air with a gun, shouting:

*"Never come back here!"*

The individuals found themselves 30 km from Velika Kladusa and walked back for hours through the dark without the GPS or lights.

*"We came back exhausted, without money to buy food, without phones to call our families..., we are not animals, we just want to live a real life!"*

The interview was conducted in cooperation with *Thé et Café pour les réfugiés*.

17/03/2019

## **"THEY BOTH ASKED FOR ASYLUM BUT THE SLOVENIAN POLICE DENIED IT, SHOUTING:"TALIBAN, TALIBAN!""**

**Date and time:** March 17, 2019 21:00

**Location:** Podljubelj, Slovenia, Croatia-Slovenia border area with mountains surrounding them. The border police station was in front of them

**Coordinates:** 46.428376278520666, 14.26660312118463

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 15,17 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting

**Police involved:** 4 Slovenian border officers, dressed in blue, no special force. Slovenian flag on the arm and one small white car. Unknown number of Croatian police officers in a gray car

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The two people-on-the-move were chain pushed-back from Slovenia to Croatia, then directly from Croatia to Serbia.

The respondents claimed that they were already deported between 16 and 17 times, sometimes from Croatia and sometimes from Serbia. This report is the first time that they were pushed back from Slovenia.

The two brothers from Afghanistan (aged 17 and 15) went on game at 9 pm on March 17, 2019. The smuggler opened a fabric behind the door of a truck with shears and locked it after they had climbed inside the truck. Without food or water they stayed there for three days.

They crossed the Croatian and the Slovenian border but were caught by the Slovenian authorities on March 20 at 5 am, when the truck passed through the border scanner. The officers opened the door of the truck and then opened the fabric of the truck with a knife. Due to the early hour it was very dark and through the blizzard, they saw a mountain to their right and left side and the border police station in front of them.

The Slovenian officers caught them without beating them. They were regular police, described as being dressed in blue uniforms with the Slovenian flag's emblem on their arms, no special force. They asked the two respondents if they spoke English, to which they said they did not. The respondent can't tell if they spoke Slovenian, as he could neither understand anything nor recognize the language.

They both asked for asylum but the Slovenian police denied it, shouting:

*"Taliban, Taliban!"*

The Slovenian police took five portraits of both of them holding a paper saying their names.

*"I didn't know what written on paper."*

They took the photos inside the truck with two different cameras. Then, they got off the truck and took more photos.

Afterwards, they went to the border police station and the Slovenian police asked the brothers for their name, their father's name, their nationality, and some other details and took more photos of them, but didn't take fingerprints. They had to sign a document which they also couldn't understand. There was neither a translator nor a lawyer present. Further, the officers took their phones and power banks.

Shortly after, they told them to enter a white car and drove them for two hours till they arrived at the Croatian border. There they switched to a grey car from the Croatian authorities and their phones and power banks were returned.

After, the Croatian officers drove them to the Serbian border and beat them up when they got off the car. They kicked them and punched them in the back, on the arms and chests.

**12/03/2019**

**"WE WERE LIKE ZOMBIES. I DID NOT FEEL ANYTHING ELSE BUT VOMIT AND HEADACHE."**

**Date and time:** March 12, 2019 00:00

**Location:** near Veliki Obljaj, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.218623, 16.011921

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: 7-14, 50, unknown , from: Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, threatening with guns, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Around 10 officers in different locations. Slovenian Police: Dark blue uniforms with guns, batons, handcuffs and sprays on their belts. Hexagonal or pentagonal emblem with the Slovenian flag and the letters "Policija" on the sleeves. Croatian officers: Dark blue uniforms. Several vans in different locations

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 13 people-on-the-move were chain pushed-back from Slovenia to Croatian, then directly from Croatia to Bosnia.

The group of initially 24 people-on-the-move started their journey on March 3, 2019, in Velika Kladuša (BIH). Near Miljkovici (BIH) at the approximate coordinates 45.2027349, 15.8023509, they crossed the Croatian border.

The group walked mostly in the nights and slept in the forests. After several nights of walking, the group ran out of food. The only thing left was some bread, walnuts and raisins. Their approximate coordinates at that point were 45.4240133,15.6283776. Therefore, 11 persons decided to leave the group and to voluntarily go to the Croatian authorities who then took them back to Bosnia.

The rest of the group, 13 persons, among them five minors aged between seven and 14 and three women, continued their journey towards Slovenia and tried to speed up as much as possible.

After a total of eight nights and two days of walking, they reached the border between Croatia and Slovenia on March 11. They entered Slovenia around 9 am near Zilje (SVN) at the approximate coordinates 45.4597271,15.2956027. They crossed the Kolpa river by foot, with the water reaching their upper thighs. The father of the reporting family had to cross the river twice because his wife, who had her menstruation and was generally weakened after the long walking, was not strong enough to carry any of their luggage through the river. There was heavy rainfall and they were all wet and cold.

After another hour and around two more kilometers of walking in Slovenia, they were apprehended by two Slovenian officers driving in a Renault Megane police car. One officer was male and young. The other one was a woman. She seemed very angry, pointed with her gun at the group of 13 and shouted at them. She then put her gun directly at the temple of an Afghani man.

The two officers made a call and shortly after, two vans arrived, each carrying two to three officers. The officers were wearing dark blue uniforms and carried guns, batons, handcuffs and sprays on their belts. On their sleeves, there was a hexagonal or pentagonal emblem with the Slovenian flag and the letters "Policija".

Two officers took the son, aged 14, of the reporting family away from the group without telling the parents where they were taking him.

*"We were so very worried."*

During the interview it was still noticeable how much this experience had unsettled them. The father told the officer:

*"I want to go with my son!"*

But they denied that, took him harshly by his arm and pushed him into one of the vans, the respondent asserted. All men were told to enter the same van, while the women and children had to get into the other van. The backspace of the vans were windowless and very dark. There was just a small plastic window of around seven centimetres height, through which they could see into the driver's cabin. On the ceiling of the backspace, there were two ventilators. It was very cold in there.

*"The air inside the van was very bad."*

He pointed out that he had never before had to vomit in a car, but during the 30 minutes transfer which followed he had to throw up twice. All other in the same van had to vomit as well. In the floor there was kind of a hole where the vomit would spill in. The father managed to put his nose between the wings of the backdoor and was able to breath a bit fresh air which gave him some relief. He believed that the officers filled some kind of gas into the backspace to make them vomit. He did not recognize a particular smell or a color of the air in the van. The men knocked on the van's walls and shouted to stop the car and let them out. The policemen, however, just shouted back:

*"Šuti! Šuti!" [Engl.: Shut up]*

In the women's car, several people also vomited, but the mother of the reporting family couldn't specify whether most or all of the persons were vomiting because she was so much absorbed by worrying about her son. After some 30 minutes of driving, the vans reached a police station near Veliki Nerajec (SLN), at the coordinates 45.5096867, 15.1864282. Once outside of the vans, the sickness faded soon.

Meanwhile, the officer who had taken the son, asked him to show them where and how the group had crossed the border. By using the proper road instead of the way through the forest which the group had taken, they reached the river within some 30 minutes. The officer asked the teenager:

*"Would you like to stay in Slovenia?"*

When the boy replied yes, he asked him why.

*"Because Slovenia is in the Schengen area and the economic and the work situation is better than in Bosnia."*

The officer answered with ok. The teenager asked him:

*"What can we do so that we can stay in Slovenia?"*

The officer just replied:

*"You can't stay in Slovenia."*

The teenager asked him several times why they could not stay, but each time the officer just answered:

*"I don't know."*

Then, they took the teenager to a police car, a Volvo, and he was driven to the same police station as the rest of the group where he was finally reunited with his parents.

In the police station, the people on the move was given fast food. Then, one by one was asked a series of questions, i.e. where they come from. The father of the reporting family told the officer that he wanted to stay in Slovenia. They asked him:

*"How do you want to live here?"*

He replied:

*"I will work."*

After that, they just said:

*"No, you just go back!"*

After a while, the officers took all their bags, put them into a plastic bag and searched everyone, including the children. They also took away their money and phones.

*"They took everything except the clothes we were wearing. They took even our shoes and gave us slippers instead."*

All belongings that contained metal, such as their razors, nail clippers, scissors, needles and earrings, were thrown in a bin.

The father of the reporting family then had to sign three or four papers, all written in Slovenian. There was a translator present, however he did not explain what was written on the papers. The father didn't know why the translator didn't give any explanations. He also didn't get a copy of the papers he had signed.

After around three hours at the first police station near Veliki Nerajec, the group of 13 was told to enter two vans again. Inside the van, they again had to vomit.

They now drove for around 20 minutes, until they reached another police station, where each family had to share one room with a toilet inside. The room was warm, they were given food, blankets and sheets. They stayed there for one night.

In the morning of March 12, two cars brought them to a Croatian border crossing on a highway where no river was visible. The Slovenian officers returned their bags and handed the group over to the Croatian authorities who were wearing dark blue uniforms. They told the whole

group of 13 persons to enter one van together and to take their luggage with them. During the following transfer, they had to vomit again.

After approximately one hour driving, the van stopped at a Croatian police station at an unknown location. The two employees inside were wearing civil clothes and told the people on the move to write down their names on a paper and to hold it in front of their chest. The officers then took photos of them. This was done one by one, also with the children.

After this short stop, they continued their trip in the van. Again there was vomiting. The father of the reporting family described this transfer as follows:

*"I just wished that nobody would speak to me, my head was hurting so badly and I was feeling so sick. I was feeling as if I would be dying."*

His son reported that there were no seats with seat belts in the van, just a board at the wall where they could sit. Some children and also his mother fell down on the van's floor.

*"We were like zombies. I did not feel anything else but vomit and headache."*

After some 1,5 hours driving, the van stopped again, this time at the border between Croatia and Bosnia, east of Velika Kladusa. It was in the mountains, nearby some villages, and there was just a small road for agricultural vehicles. The respondent located the push-back to have taken place around the coordinates 45.218623, 16.011921, near Veliki Obljaj (HRV). Once they arrived there, their phones and money was returned, but not the metallic items which the Slovenian officers had put into the bin. The Croatian officers said:

*"Hajde! Ideš, marš!"*

On their way to Velika Kladusa, they noticed dozens of broken phones on the roadside. After an estimated 25 kilometers of walking, the enfeebled mother of the reporting family fell down. It was already dark, but they were able to reach a restaurant and asked for help. The people inside called the Bosnian authorities, who then took them to a hospital and acted friendly. After some two hours in the hospital, the mother was given a serum and the family went the Miral camp in Velika Kladuša. From there, the IOM brought them by car to the camp in Bihac, where they arrived around 3 am on March 13.

In the end of the interview, the mother of the reporting family stressed that she will never forget this experience:

*"Our deportation from Slovenia is one of the worst experiences I have ever had. This journey is a very difficult memory for me."*

The father nodded and added:

*"And nonetheless, we will have to try again. We do not have another choice. Where else should we stay?"*

11/03/2019

## “THE WAY THE POLICE ACTED REALLY LEFT ME WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SCARS”

**Date and time:** March 11, 2019 05:05

**Location:** near Glinica, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 45.202604, 15.9407112

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 32-57 , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** threatening with guns

**Police involved:** 4 Slovenian police officers (3 males, 1 female), 1 police car (Dacia Duster), 1 officer carrying a weapon, 2 police officers in the white suit and the blue gloves, 1 female officer, 1 van, unknown number of Croatian officers at border, 1 van,

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five people-on-the-move from Morocco was chain pushed-back from Slovenia to Croatia, then from Croatia to Bosnia.

The Group of five men started in Bihac (BIH) on March 4, 2019, and after they crossed the Croatian border, they continued walking for eight days through Croatia towards the Slovenian border.

On March 11, they arrived at an old bridge at the Kupa border river at an old bridge. After they crossed the bridge, a group of three male and one female Slovenian officer was waiting at the other side in Slavski Laz next to a steel door and a fence. The officers asked them how many people they were and if there were more coming.

Then the officers entered their police car, a Dacia Duster, and made phone calls. After 10 minutes, they opened the steel gate and the people on the move stepped inside. The officers searched their bodies and asked them if they carried knives or weapons with them or anything else that could harm them.

Afterwards, around 5 am, they brought them with a van to the Kočevje police station. There they asked for asylum and the officers replied:

*“Yes, yes okay.”*

Then they put them into a room with two toilets, video cameras on the ceiling and a wall with an interrogation glass, where you can only look through from one side, the respondent recounted. The officers brought them food and took their phones. According to the respondent, the group of five spend one night in the room because they couldn't push them back earlier due to a lot of snow outside.

The next day, two people with white suits, blue gloves and masks interrogated them. They asked them why they were there, where they were from and more similar questions. They only took the fingerprint of the index finger of the right hand, told them to look in the camera without asking questions and took photos of everyone.

Then an officer in uniform, carrying weapons on his belt gave them about eight documents in Slovenian, which they had to sign without translation. They also took their money and brought them back to the interrogation room. There, one individual requested one more time for an asylum procedure and one officer replied only that it takes time.

One Iraqi minor was brought to the station and interrogated with the help of one of the five individuals. He arrived together with a social worker with red hair from an organization which takes care of minors. There was also a female officer woman (R. TROPIĆ) sitting at a desk. When one individual asked for asylum again, she just said, that it is going to happen later. The respondent recounted that the female officer lied to the social worker by telling her that after one night they would be sent to a camp where they would be able to apply for asylum. Also, one person asked to call his family or a lawyer, but she refused and told him, that he could call them later in the camp.

Afterwards, they brought them papers declaring a penalty fine of about €500 for illegally crossing the border. All of them signed it, because they thought it is important to have at least this one paper. The respondent reported how the police officer lied again to the social worker and the asylum-seekers and assured that they would be brought to the camp.

In the next morning at 10 am on March 12, after about 30 hours, the officers brought them to the van and said:

*“Don’t worry, everything is going to be fine.”*

When they got off the van again, they realized that they had been brought to the border checkpoint Petrina, where the Croatian authorities already waited for them. One individual asked a female Croatian officer, why they were at this location and that they want asylum. She was shocked by the question and asked the Slovenian officers why they brought the group to the border, but never explained it to the asylum-seekers.

*“You could tell on their faces, that they were doing something illegal.”*

The Slovenian officers handed over some documents to the Croatian authorities, as well as the phones and the money. After that, the Croatian officers took some new papers out of the car, wrote the names of the five of them down and took photos, while they were told to hold the papers in front of their chests. They also filled in a form for every individual with the questions:

*“Where are you from? How long did you walk? How many people? Where did you start?”*

Then, they forced them to sign the papers, but never handed them any of those documents out. In the end the five individuals had to enter the van again and were driven three hours near Glinica (the estimated location is shown on the map). One individual had terrible open wounds on the feet from walking. In Slovenia, a doctor just put some bandages on them and told him not to walk that much. But at 3 am, they were forced to walk 15 km back to Velika Kladuša.

*"In Slovenia I thought I finally made it, that I get asylum and it is a secure place. I was really shocked, when you mention the name of the police station in Kočevje I am still shaking inside. Because the way the police acted really, really left me with psychological scars. Even the police officers in the white suit and the blue gloves, when they were talking to me, asked me why I choose Slovenia. I was heading there because I believed in Slovenian democracy and the very advanced legal system with human rights protection. So I wanted to establish my life with my family here in Slovenia. But I was shocked how police can zigzag the law, how they bullshit people to sign paper without translation and lie to your face, it is really shocking. How can you say no, if someone with weapons on his waist comes to you and tells you to sign this paper? I was disappointed by such lies and deception from the police. Why did they keep some documents from us?"*

The respondent received three of all the documents he signed, which could be archived:

### **1. Document: Order of detention**

It says, this person, who was detained, got an explanation in English (not the mother language) about:

- the reasons why he was detained
- that he is not obliged to give any information
- that he has the right to medical treatment
- that he has the right to have a legal representative, that he can choose by himself
- that the person understood what was communicated to him.

The individual has crossed the state border between Slovenia and Croatia in an illegal way (without permission) by passing over a hanging bridge in Slavski Laz and has in doing so avoided mandatory border control at the external border. It is because of this reason that the individual must be extradited (=pushed back) to foreign (Croatian) authorities.

### **2. Document:**

The police has the right, to take away his identity documents (like passport, drivers license, ID-card etc.) to find out his identity. But in this case he didn't have any of these, so they couldn't do it.

### **3. Document:**

A fine for crossing the border illegally of €500. But because he was four hours in detention, he was given a compensation of €10 per hour so the fine was reduced to €460.

These documents make the practice of the Slovenian police clear:

- There was no translation despite mentioned in the documents
- They did not tell them about their rights, not even in English
- They wrote that it was explained to the person in English, which is NOT the mother language and therefore not sufficient

→ Anyway in this specific case, the content of the signed papers wasn't expressed at all.

- They lied to the asylum-seekers and social worker about the asylum request
- They did not let them call any legal representative or family members
- They gave them compensation for four hours (to reduce the fine) but actually detained them for about 30 hours
- They kept some documents from them
- They forced them to sign documents which they weren't able to understand
- They justified the push-back with the illegal border crossing of the person
- They cooperated with the Croatian police concerning the push-back

**Coordinates of Locations:**

Old bridge over Kupa-River (Slovenian/Croatian border, near Slavski Laz): 45.4785, 14.9101

Kočevje police station: 45.6459645, 14.8528260

Petrina: 45.4640, 14.8528

Glinica: 45.2026040, 15.9407112

**03/03/2019**

**"I HAD TEARS IN MY EYES – I WANTED ASYLUM!"**

**Date and time:** March 3, 2019 18:00

**Location:** near Velika Kladuša, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 45.18019, 15.772976

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 23, unknown, from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Croatian police officers, caught and soon joined some officers (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 speaking 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

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

*The group of two Algerian men were chain push-backed from Slovenia to Croatia, then the next day from Croatia to Bosnia.*

*The men started their journey from Bihać (BiH) on March 2, 2019, and eventually took a bus to Bosanski Brod (BiH).*

*From there, they crossed the border to Croatia over the official bridge around 2 am in the following night. They were seen by the border police but managed to escape. All three of them ran into different directions. The respondent jumped down from some stairs and hurt his foot. He and another individual of the group were able to hide from the police, but the third one got caught on the bridge right away and is now in detention as stated by the respondent. The two others were hiding for about 1.5 hours until the police stopped looking for them.*

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

After that, around 7 am on March 3, the two of them walked into the next town and took a bus to Zagreb (HRV), buying their bus tickets without problems.

Around 10.30 am they switched to another bus which brought them from Zagreb to Varaždin (HRV) at the Slovenian border. As the respondent's injured foot was aching, the two of them started to look for medicine in the town.

As it was Sunday, it was very calm, but they finally found a pharmacy where the woman asked €22 for the medicine. They couldn't afford this and were forced to leave again without any medicine.

They continued walking to the next town, Čakovec (HRV), where they found an abandoned house and slept for a few hours.

Later that day, they continued walking towards the Slovenian border. As their phones ran out of battery, they didn't have GPS anymore and it was hard to find a good way. On the way, a police car passed them twice, but each time they managed to hide and weren't seen by the authorities. Then a car stopped, with a woman and a man sitting inside.

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

The couple offered them to take them with their car over the border for €100. The two didn't have this much money and gave them the €50 they had with them. Nevertheless, the couple took them into their car. Right away, just 200 to 300 meters across the border, a police car showed up and stopped the car.

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

The officers asked for the documents of the group, so the woman and the man showed their ID's, and the respondent told the officers that he and his friend didn't have any.

The officer asked if the men paid for getting taken over the border by car. The respondent denied and explained that the couple took them because of his injured foot. The officers were wearing black and blue uniforms with the official sign of the Croatian police. They made a call and another officer arrived with a white-blue car with an official police sign on it. The respondent and his friend were taken to a police station in Čakovec (HRV).

At the police station were about 10 officers, including the officers who stopped them at the border. One officer spoke English. The respondent and his friend got a plain piece of paper, where they had to write down their names, the names of their fathers, their nationality and from which country they entered Croatia. Neither fingerprints nor photos were taken.

During the detention the officers gave them some food and water. The respondent 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 officers drove the two of them to a hospital, where respondent got a wheelchair and a radiography of his foot was taken. While waiting, the individual asked the officers again for the asylum process. Now their answer was:

*“This is not on our level.”*

The doctor came back and talked only to the officers. The respondent didn't get any explanation about the results of the medical examination. One officer then told him:

*“You have nothing, why are you acting like this?!”*

*Afterwards they were taken to a different police station.*

*“I had tears in my eyes – I wanted asylum!”*

At this police station the two of them had to fill out an official form, written in English and Croatian. Although they didn't understand what exactly was written in the form, they signed it. After 20 minutes, the officers came back with another paper, which they had to hold while photos were taken of them. The respondent asked, if this all was for asylum, but they answered:

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

Three officers, different from the ones in the morning, drove them by a van to the border of Bosnia, around the area of Velika Kladuša. Those three officers were wearing dark blue/black uniforms and no hat other than the earlier ones with the official Croatian police uniform as the respondent called to mind. The officers gave the two of them a bottle of water for the ride.

Around 6 pm the following evening on March 3, they started in Čakovec (HRV) and about three hours later, around 9 pm, they arrived at the border. The respondent mentioned he saw how the officers stopped at a small shop to buy some beer for themselves on the way.

At the border, the officers opened the door of the van. The respondent saw another police car there with four to five officers. The two individuals had to get off the van and were ordered to walk towards the border for around 500 meters (the approximate location is indicated on the map below).

On the Bosnian side, they continued walking to Velika Kladuša (BIH). They walked to the official camp of Miral, but were sent away, so they spent the following night in the doorway of a mosque in Velika Kladuša. The next day, March 4, they made their way back to Sarajevo.

**27/02/2019**

**“WE GAVE ALL TO THEM, BECAUSE WE THOUGHT THEY WILL GIVE US ASYLUM!”**

**Date and time:** February 27, 2019 06:00

**Location:** close to Poljana/Velika Kladuša, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 45.216506, 15.925539

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 17-29 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground

**Police involved:** Caught by Slovenian police officers, handed over Croatian officers, violently deported by 7-8 Croatian officers (in black uniforms without any identifiable symbols, having black ski masks)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of eight Algerian men (aged between 17-29) were chain pushed-back from Slovenia to Croatia, then directly from Croatia to Bosnia.

The group left Croatia on February 19, 2019, and walked for eight days before they entered Slovenia. At around 12 am on February 27, the group was detected by the Slovenian police close to Črnomelj (SVN).

The people-on-the-move were then driven by a car about 10 minutes to a police station. There, the officers took their fingerprints and photos, made them sign some papers and further asked them to pay a fine of €270. However, the group misunderstood this request and believed that those papers and the money was for the asylum process which they had previously asked for.

*"We gave all to them, because we thought they will give us asylum!"*

The group waited at the police station for around seven hours and got some bread and water.

*"It was like a prison."*

At around 12 pm, the Slovenian officers drove the seven of them for 30 minutes to the Croatian border where they were handed over to the Croatian authorities. Again, they were brought to a police station, this time

on the Croatian side, where their fingerprints were taken once more. Afterwards, they had to wait until 4 am, February 28. Then they were driven to the border of Bosnia, close to Poljana (BIH).

They arrived there around 6 am and between seven and eight officers, wearing black uniforms without any identifiable symbols and balaclavas, were waiting for them. The van was parked around 100 meters away from a small river, marking the Croatian border with Bosnia (approximate location on map).

The seven individuals had to get off the van one by one. The door was opened, one person was taken out, and the door was closed again. Outside, the officers were standing on each side of the van, forming a “tunnel”. When one individual got off the van, he was beaten with batons, then the officers ran after him and forced him into the river where the water was waist-high.

*“When one of us fell in the dirt, the officers beat him directly in the face.”*

Once the group of eight had reached the other side of the border, they walked back to Velika Kladusa, which took them around three hours.

**22/02/2019**

## **“THEY CAME AND SEARCHED THE RIVER, BUT NOBODY FOUND HIM.”**

**Date and time:** February 22, 2019 10:00

**Location:** near Velika Kladuša, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 45.196099, 15.792675

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: 19-24 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** threatening with guns

**Police involved:** 7 Slovenian officers, 2 of them dressed in standard police uniforms, 5 of them dressed in military-style uniforms. 5 Croatian officers, 1 driver, 1 van

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 9 people-on-the-move was chain push-backed from Slovenia to Croatia, then directly from Croatia to Bosnia.

One man went missing when the group tried to cross the river Koplja at Slovenian-Croatian border.

The group of ten left from Bihać (BIH) on February 14, 2019. The seven Algerian men and three Moroccan women crossed the border to Croatia and reached the Slovenian border after seven days of walking. At around 4 pm on the February 20, the ten of them decided to enter Slovenia by passing the border river Kolpa. The current of the river was very strong so it was challenging for them to cross it. They decided that the men would cross first, so the three women were watching them crossing from the Croatian side. When the last one went in, he soon lost his fight against the river's strong current and got carried away by the water.

Shocked by this, the six men told the women not to enter the water, as it would have been too dangerous for them, and to stay in Croatia. Then, they started to search for their friend, but couldn't find him.

*"I feel so lost and alone."*

In an attempt to signal for help, the group decided to make a large fire, hoping it would attract the police. They started the fire at around 5 pm, but no one came.

After this shocking event and the following desperate search, the exhausted group fell asleep next to the fire. At around 4 am on February 21, they were woken up by a group of Slovenian officers. Two were dressed in standard police uniforms and five officers were dressed in military-style uniforms, all carried guns as stated by the respondents.

First the officers dressed in standard uniforms searched the group of six. They told the police officers what happened and the Slovenian officers called out for help.

*"They came and searched the river, but nobody found him."*

Afterwards, the six of them were taken to a police station.

The group spend one day at the station during which they were questioned by a Palestinian translator about their migration route and where their ultimate destination was. The translator

did not answer any of their questions regarding asylum. Their fingerprints of their index fingers were taken as well as photos, and they also had to sign papers.

On the next morning, February 22, around 10 am, the Slovenian officers drove the six of them in a van back to the Croatian border. There, they were handed over to the Croatian authorities and had to switch into another van. In this van, there were already other people on the move, in total they were now 13 people. The van drove about one hour until they reached the Bosnian border. The entire group was told to exit the van together and to walk back to Bosnia (approximate location shown on map). Five Croatian officers and one driver were present, when the group entered Bosnia again.

Then, the group of 13 walked back to Velika Kladuša (BIH) and arrived there at the same day.

**14/02/2019**

## **“THE OFFICERS TREATED THE GROUP IN A ROUGH WAY AND HANDCUFFED ONE OF THEM”**

**Date and time:** February 14, 2019 00:15

**Location:** near Zagrad outside of Velika Kladusa (BIH)

**Coordinates:** 45.188063, 15.779515

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 17-29 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** insulting, handcuffed

**Police involved:** Caught by several Slovenian police officers (in black uniforms, five cars, treating roughly), at the police station and deporting by a van some Slovenian officers, handed over some Croatian officers, at the Bosnian border 2 Slovenian (previously encountered) and 7 Croatian officers (without masks)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

ON FEBRUARY 1, A GROUP OF EIGHT LEFT FROM VELIKA KLADUSA (BIH) WITH THE INTENTION TO TRANSIT THROUGH CROATIA AND SLOVENIA. THE YOUNGEST OF THE MEN WAS 17 YEARS OLD. THE GROUP WALKED FOR 27 KM TO THE BORDER OF CROATIA AND THEN CONTINUED THROUGH THE COUNTRY FOR FIVE DAYS BEFORE REACHING THE BORDER TO SLOVENIA. THEY CROSSED IT BY FOOT AND THEN CONTINUED WALKING IN SLOVENIA FOR THREE DAYS.

WHEN THEY WERE IN THE CITY OF NOVO MESTO (SVN), ON FEBRUARY 10, AROUND 2.30 PM, SEVERAL SLOVENIAN OFFICERS IN BLACK UNIFORMS ARRIVED WITH FIVE CARS AND APPREHENDED THE EIGHT OF THEM. THE RESPONDENTS DESCRIBE THAT PREVIOUSLY, WHEN THEY WERE WALKING AROUND NOVO MESTO, THE RESIDENTS HAD BEEN STARING AT THEM, AND THEY SUPPOSE ONE OF THEM MIGHT HAVE CALLED THE POLICE. THE OFFICERS TREATED THE GROUP IN A ROUGH WAY AND HANDCUFFED ONE OF THEM. SOON AFTER, THE GROUP OF EIGHT WAS DRIVEN TO A PRISON IN IGLENIK (SVN).

THERE, THEY HAD TO SHARE A CELL FOR THREE DAYS. THE EIGHT OF THEM RECEIVED ONLY A SMALL AMOUNT OF BREAD EVERY DAY TO EAT AND HAD WATER IN THE CELL. DURING THE DETENTION, ONE BY ONE WAS TAKEN TO A TRANSLATOR FROM EGYPT. THE EIGHT OF THEM COMPLAINED THAT HE DID NOT HAND OVER THEIR QUESTIONS TO THE OFFICERS AND DID NOT REACT IN ANY WAY WHEN THEY EXPRESSED THEIR INTENTION TO CLAIM ASYLUM. IN ADDITION, THEY ALSO HAD TO SIGN PAPERS WRITTEN IN SLOVENIAN WHICH THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WITHOUT A TRANSLATION. ONE OF THESE PAPERS WAS HANDED OUT TO THEM (SEE PHOTO). THE SLOVENIAN POLICE OFFICERS TOOK PHOTOS AND FINGERPRINTS OF THEIR INDEX FINGERS WERE TAKEN AS WELL.

THE MINOR OF THE GROUP DESCRIBED THAT HE LIED ABOUT HIS AGE TO THE POLICE AT THIS PRISON BECAUSE OF HIS FEARS THAT HE WOULD BE SEPARATED FROM HIS FAMILY.

*"YOU KNOW I AM A MINOR BUT I LIED ABOUT MY AGE, CAUSE IF I SAID I AM MINOR THEY HAD TAKE ME AWAY FROM MY BROTHER."*

AFTER THESE THREE DAYS IN THE PRISON, IN THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 13, THE GROUP HAD TO ENTER ANOTHER VAN. THE CAR WAS QUITE LARGE, BUT THE MEN HAD ONLY A SMALL SPACE TO SIT. THEY DROVE FROM THE PRISON AT IGLENIK TO THE BORDER OF CROATIA AT METLIKA (SVN). FROM THERE, SOME CROATIAN OFFICERS TOOK THE CAR OVER AND BROUGHT THEM TO THE BORDER OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA NEAR ZAGRAD OUTSIDE OF VELIKA Kladusa (BIH). THIS JOURNEY TOOK THEM ABOUT TWO HOURS, UNTIL LATE NIGHT AROUND 12.15 AM ON FEBRUARY 14.

AT THE ESTIMATED LOCATION, THE GROUP HAD TO GET OFF THE VAN ONE-BY-ONE. THREE OFFICERS WERE STANDING RIGHT NEXT TO THE VAN AND SIX WERE STANDING IN TWO LINES ON EACH SIDE OF THE VAN. THE PEOPLE ON THE MOVE HAD TO WALK OR RUN THROUGH THIS "TUNNEL". THE RESPONDENTS SAW TWO OF THE SLOVENIAN OFFICERS THEY HAD MET PREVIOUSLY AS WELL AS SEVEN CROATIAN OFFICERS. NONE OF THEM WAS WEARING BALACLAVAS AND NOBODY WAS THREATENING THEM WITH PHYSICAL VIOLENCE. DURING THE PUSH BACK THOU, THEY WERE SHOUTING:

*"GO BACK TO BOSNIA!"*

*THE GROUP OF EIGHT CROSSED THE BORDER AND RETURNED TO BOSNIA.*

25/01/2019

**“ALL I WANT TO DO IS TO FIND A PLACE TO BE AND I WILL FIND A JOB AND BRING MY BOY TO BE WITH ME”**

**Date and time:** January 25, 2019 22:30

**Location:** 5 km away from Velika Kladuša, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 45.193960942817, 15.786206718041

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: unknown , from: Syria, Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** threatening with baton

**Police involved:** 2 police officers with blue uniform, 2 stars, "M61" at the shoulder, 1 small police car; Slovenian police officers at police station; Bosnian police officers at border

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of six (5 male and 1 female) from Syria, Egypt, Eritrea and Sudan was chain pushed back from Slovenia to Croatia, then directly from Croatia to Bosnia.

The group left from Velika Kladuša (BIH) on January 13, 2019. After walking for nine days in Croatia, they reached Slovenia. While walking through Croatia, the group faced deep snow, reaching up to their legs, for the main part of their journey. After crossing the border of Slovenia, the group continued walking for around 25 km, which took them two days. They already had tried previously that month, to enter Slovenia in order to request asylum.

After two days and nights, they entered a town in Slovenia on the morning of January 25, with the intention of finding a police station to turn themselves in and request asylum.

But when they approached the town, the group of six was apprehended by two Slovenian officers in a small car around 9.30 am. They wore blue uniforms with two star emblems on top of each other on their chests as the respondent called to mind.

*“Also it say ‘M61’ on the shoulder of the uniforms.”*

The six of them were taken to exactly the same police station where the respondent had been taken to earlier in January, when he had entered Slovenia also with the intention of claiming asylum.

During his time in the station, the respondent was interviewed by a translator who, in his opinion, conducted his job more professionally than the previous translator he met in Slovenia.

*"It was good translator."*

This translator was male with tan skin and short hair. He spoke a Lebanese dialect of Arabic and was approximately 50 years old. The respondent explained that, in comparison to his previous translator, this translator only asked questions after being asked by the officer in the room. He did not, other than the previous translator, independently conduct the interview.

Despite this, the respondent faced some difficulties during the interview, especially in regard to his intention to claim asylum. During his previous interviews in Slovenia, one of the officers had crossed out his intended destination of Slovenia and written Italy. As such, the respondent described being told by the officer in charge of his interview that they could not offer him asylum, since they believed he would just continue to Italy. The officer then asked the respondent via the translator, why he came to Slovenia and why he had left his home country. He implied that Darfur is a safe place for people to live in. When the respondent began to describe his past, elaborating on his experiences being tortured by officers in his country, the officer told him that he didn't care and moved on to the next question.

Afterwards, the respondent described that all of his groups' bags, sleeping bags, and clothes were thrown out in Slovenia. He thought that perhaps this was because they were wet and soaked through with water and accordingly the authorities didn't want to keep them. Although he didn't see any officer disposing the things, they never received them back.

Additionally, the respondent had his phone smashed by Slovenian authorities in the police station. He was later given this phone back. This behavior was surprising to the respondent who commented that he had only heard of Croatian police officer breaking phones. During their time at the station, the female member of the group, who was pregnant, was taken to a doctor or hospital where they confirmed she was seven months pregnant.

The respondent described being advised to sign similar papers to the ones that he had signed previously in Slovenia. He didn't have his photos taken, but had to give his fingerprints. He was told that he normally would have to pay a €480 fine for crossing the border illegally. However, the authorities told him that they would not make him pay this time.

At around 4 pm, the group of six was brought to a Croatian police station at an official border checkpoint between Slovenia and Croatia. At this location, the respondent had to sign several documents which were written in Croatian. After being detained at the station for several hours, they had to enter a van and were transported back to the Bosnian border.

When the van finally reached the border at 10.30 pm, they had to get off one by one.

*"One officer pretend to hit us. He made us scared, but then, he didn't hit us."*

The officer targeted them with his baton, but then stopped shortly before actually touching them. Another officer discouraged him from continuing. The respondent supposes the reason for this behavior to have been the presence of a woman.

After crossing the border to Bosnia, the six of them walked five kilometers back to the Miral camp, outside of Velika Kladuša.

The respondent had left his country after he was tortured by police officers in Darfur. In the end of the interview, he described his desperation to find a safe place to restart his life and be reunited with his son:

*"All I want to do is to find a place to be and I will find a job and bring my boy to be with me"*

He expressed multiple times his confusion that Slovenian authorities continue to deny him this opportunity.

**22/01/2019**

## **"ALL AFGHANS ARE TALIBANS"**

**Date and time:** January 22, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Obrežje, Croatia, official border crossing between Croatia and Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.84559713553495, 15.696300791601516

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 15,18,19 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Six police officers, five men and one woman. They wore black uniforms, mainly speaking Slovenian

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of three, one of them a minor (15, 18 and 19 years old) had attempted to transit Croatia inside a truck and made it to the Slovenian border. When the vehicle reached the official Croatian-Slovenian border crossing, the group noticed that the border authorities were having an argument with the driver at the scanner. Shortly after, six Slovenian officers came to check the truck and found the three of them hiding inside. They asked them to sit down and to put their hands up, before bringing them to a nearby building, supposedly the police station of the border crossing. In this building the officers asked the three of them to undress completely, and checked all of their clothes very carefully.

*"He even check the underwear."*

They then confiscated their belongings, such as their bags and gloves and the three of them didn't receive them back. At the police station, the group experienced verbal aggression from the officers who insulted them:

*"All Afghans are Talibans!"*

They had to stay around two hours at the police station, during which time their fingerprints were taken. The three of them expressed their intention to claim asylum, but were not given any chance to further this interest. The respondent repeated his request often:

*"Every time, every second, every minute", "Asyle, asyle, asyle".*

He also described that he avoided to say he was an English speaker, as he experienced physical violence from the officers during his last push-back after telling them that he spoke English. At some point, he entered the garage of the police station, and wanted to take a sweater lying there, but the officers ordered him not to. He described them as 'mad' at this point. The respondent argued that the weather was so cold and begged them to take it, while he was only wearing a T-shirt, but they refused.

After this incident, the Slovenian officers transferred the group to Croatia.

They were handed over to the Croatian authorities driven with a small car around eight hours until they reached the Serbian border. They were pushed-back at a railway track around the town of Tovarnik (HRV).

The weather was cold, it was snowing outside and the three of them only wore T-shirts. They walked back to Sid for about 2,5 hours and arrived there at 5 am on January 24.

**15/01/2019**

## **"WHEN I SEE MY FRIEND, I THINK HE WILL DIE"**

**Date and time:** January 15, 2019 00:00

**Location:** close to Velika Kladuša (Bosnia)

**Coordinates:** 45.091964527574, 15.768479269336

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 30-50 , from: Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** gunshots, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 5 Slovenian police officers in green uniforms and long rifles, 1 police van, 2 military officers and 1 police officer with black uniform, 1 Croatian male and 1 female police officers; 1 police officer driving, 2 police men with black uniform, 2 police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 15th of January 2019, a group of five men from Tunisia (aged between 30-50) were chain pushed back from Slovenia to Croatia, then directly from Croatia to Bosnia.

The group of five left Velika Kladuša (BIH) and walked all the way through Croatia until Slovenia. Eventually, they were caught by Slovenian authorities, while walking along a small path in a Slovenian forest during the evening. They were approximately 1,5 kilometers away from the Italian border. The group of around five officers fired in the air, at least three times and the five individuals stopped at a distance of twenty meters as the respondent asserted. He claimed that the officers wore green uniforms and carried long rifles. One of them was female.

The group of five was soon brought to a police van parked approximately 700 meters away from the spot where they were apprehended. After this, they were driven for 30 minutes to a police station at the Slovenian–Croatian border.

When they arrived at the police station:

*“They [policemen] took our names, where do you go, removed our clothes, jacket, shoes, all, all even underwear, in the office of the police station.”*

*“We stay in the line, outside. Take our clothes and look pockets, money [...] we stood in line and spoke for each person and one by one, took our clothes. I saw a policewoman here.”*

According to the respondent, the policewoman remained in the office. They were forced to undress completely. Later, they were made to sign a paper requesting €240, even though the officers had previously taken all the money from them, the respondent recounted.

*“After they bring me to closed room, empty room, and we told him [to a policeman] we need some food because two days, no eat, and then they bring me biscuits, water and chocolate.”*

Two hours later, a translator arrived. The five are not sure where he was originally from, but suppose he might have been Lebanese or Palestinian. He spoke only to one of the individuals and interrogated him like a police officer. According to one respondent, he conducted the interview without waiting for a question from the officers.

*“He did an interrogatory without the police in Arabic and then report whatever he wanted to the police.”*

At the police station, two military officers were present, but didn't speak or interact with the people on the move. Apparently, they were just observing as stated by the respondent. Additionally, one officer wearing a black uniform was there with the translator.

The second respondent expressed confusion with the way the translator interacted with them:

*“I think he should ask everyone the same question, but he asked only our friend. [...] My friend was coming after 1.30 am, we thought they will ask us the same as my friend, ask me and my friends, but they didn't ask.”*

The translator was described by the respondent as an elderly man, about 68 years old, brown eyes, about 65 kg, 1,65 m and with gray hair. He wore glasses and had a strict demeanor. The respondent tried to remember the translator's name and expressed that it was a name similar to "*Ismael/Saleh Majid*". The respondent explained that he only saw the translator's name briefly as he showed his business card to an officer at the station.

After the translator finished his interview, the officers took the group of five to another office to take fingerprints of their ten fingers.

During the night, one officer came to tell them that they would leave to Croatia the next morning. According to the respondent, they were brought to a checkpoint at the Croatian border at 10 am the following day. They didn't stay on the Slovenian side for long and were directly brought to the Croatian side.

*"Croatian police caught me the same way as an animal."*

They had to undress completely again at the Croatian border station.

*"After removing my clothes, all, all, all coming down."*

*"They drop me in the street, but there was a space [inside], they frisked us and removed my clothes. I told him "it's really cold", he [the policeman] told me "you have money, you have money" because I gave him my money, but he said, "you have more""*

At this location, a Croatian female officer took a photo of each of them, the respondent called to mind. The group stayed approximately seven hours at the border checkpoint on the Croatian side before being transported to the Bosnian border in a van.

*"After the bus arrived, they put me in the bus and my friend became sick inside. They opened the climatization on inside the bus. When I see my friend, I think he will die. His finger became hard, he had problem in his stomach and his saliva was going outside. That's why I punched the door "please, please, please, we need ambulance, my friend will die, he needs to go to hospital"*

Nobody answered his call, supposedly because they either didn't hear or didn't believe him. The respondent thought that his friend had collapsed due to the stress of the situation:

*"First, he was afraid, after that, it was really cold. I punched the door, "please we need a hot place", but nobody cares."*

*"We were too afraid that they would beat us."*

Eventually, they arrived at the official checkpoint near Velika Kladuša (BIH). The respondent inferred that perhaps they were brought to the official checkpoint since they had more apprehended individuals to pick up. They were transferred to a police van with three officers in the front, i.e. the driver and two officers were wearing black uniforms. A second van drove with them for half an hour to another place along the border. When they arrived, the officers opened the doors and asked them to leave. Four of the individuals carried their friend out of the van because he still felt bad. They waited until he had recovered and then walked back to Velika Kladuša.

09/01/2019

## “THEY DIDN'T EVEN LET ME GO TO THE TOILET, SO HOW COULD I TALK WITH A LAWYER?”

**Date and time:** January 9, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Kotrediz, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 46.15124099999999, 14.995462999999972

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 17 - 23 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12 police officers, wearing black uniforms with the Slovenian emblem in the factory with three cars; several others in the other police stations

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of six Afghans, aged between 17 and 23 years old, were chain pushed back from Slovenia to Croatia, then directly from Croatia to Serbia.

The group left Serbia on January 9, 2019, in the direction of Croatia. They had left from Sid at night by truck. After two days in the truck, they reached Slovenia in the afternoon. The truck stopped some time after having crossed the border and the group soon discovered that the truck was inside a factory.

About 15 workers were inside the factory and the group was detected quickly. Soon after, the authorities arrived. It were around 12 officers with three different cars. The officers informed the group that they were illegal immigrants in this country.

At this point, the officers encircled the group and it wasn't possible for them to escape as one respondent asserted. They beat the whole group with batons and black steels batons, resulting in two injured individuals, whose hand and leg got broken. As a consequence of this violence one of the respondents, fell down and collapsed. An ambulance was called, and he was brought to a hospital, while the other group members were brought to a police station.

At the police station the police provided the group with water and half a loaf of bread for every two people, but denied them access to toilets. The officers declared they would allow them to stay in the country, and asked them to wait in order to proceed with the paperwork. The group was told that this would take about seven or eight hours. After three hours, the collapsed respondent came back from the hospital.

While waiting, the people on the move were told to take off their clothes and the officers checked them, also taking their power banks and chargers. The group would never receive them back. The officers further took their fingerprints and photos and made them sign papers. As all the papers were written in Slovenian and there was no translator present, despite one of the individuals explicitly requesting one, they couldn't understand what they were signing. There was also no lawyer present.

*"They didn't even let me go to the toilet, so how could I talk with a lawyer?"*

At this police station, all individuals repeatedly asked for asylum and the officers replied:

*"I will give you".*

Nonetheless, the group later was transferred by car to another police station on the Slovenian-Croatian border, which took around 1,5 hours. One officer told them to wait:

*"You sit here, and we will talk about you, I will give you stay. Maybe I will deport you but maybe I will give you stay".*

The group waited in this police station for about five hours, before being transferred to Croatia by car. Once transferred to the Croatian police, they again took photos of all individuals and made them sign documents. And again, neither a translator nor a lawyer was present. One respondent asked the officers for some food and offered one of the officers 30 euros to buy something for the group to eat. The officer took his money, but never brought any food. The police was verbally aggressive during this time, insulting the people on the move:

*"Pičku ti matera." (English: You screw it up!)*

Eventually, the people on the move were brought back to the Serbian-Croatian border on January 12, 2019, in a vehicle, which's air conditioning was turned on throughout the approximately seven hour drive. The vehicle had neither windows nor lights as one respondent called to mind. The group arrived back to Sid at about 3 am.

At the beginning of the interview, both interviewees mentioned to have been pushed-back many times: Five times from Slovenia, once from Zagreb (Croatia), and twice from another place in Croatia.

**01/01/2019**

## **"[...] STANDING NAKED IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS AND THE OFFICER FOR FIVE MINUTES"**

**Date and time:** January 1, 2019 18:00

**Location:** Golac, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.5148274, 14.063373500000012

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: respondent 24, others unknown , from: Palestine, Syria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** forcing to undress, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Slovenian police officers before and at police station; later Croatian police officers with blue uniform; 10-12 police officers, 4 police cars at the border

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, denial of access to toilets

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A 24-year-old Syrian man was chain pushed back from Slovenia to Croatia, then from Croatia directly further to Bosnia, along with 8 people from Syria.

The group of nine traveled by a car close to the Croatian-Slovenian border and got off at the Croatian side. The individuals didn't understand the GPS locations they intended to travel towards and were led on a detouring route. They walked around for seven hours before actually entering Slovenia. At that point, their internet ceased to work and their ability to navigate through GPS stopped. At around 9 am, the respondent voiced his desire to enter a nearby town in order to access internet from a restaurant or cafe. The other eight dissuaded him from doing this at this time. Nonetheless, by 6 pm, the respondent along with the rest of the group had grown despondent about their situation, and they entered a town with the intention to seek out the authorities:

*"I was hungry and I did not drink water today, so I went to the police."*

When they encountered some officers, the respondent described that one of their first questions was where the group was from:

*"I told them 'I am from Syria.' and they said 'Okay, stay here.'"*

Within an hour, they were brought inside a police station, where the nine of them were frisked in the same room. Each individual was told to undress to their underwear to have their clothes searched. The respondent stripped down to his underwear but afterwards was told that he had to take off his boxers too. He hesitated to do so, but a tall, blonde officer, approximately 25 years old, forcefully told him to take off his underwear. He was the only one of the group made to undress completely, standing naked in front of the others and the officer for five minutes.

*"All friends did not take off their boxers."*

Between 9 and 10 pm, a Palestinian translator arrived and began to interview the individuals one by one. The respondent described that he talked to the translator for two hours, which was much longer than any of the others of his group, who only talked to the translator for about five minutes. He inferred that his

interview was much longer since he had asked for asylum during his interview, unlike the other group members:

*"I said 'I stay', the rest of the group did not say 'I stay.'"*

During his interview, there were three officers in addition to the translator in the room. He and the translator sat on one side of the table while the three officers faced them, saying only little. There were two computers in the room and one machine for taking fingerprints. He had his fingerprints taken twice – one time all ten fingers and the other time only his two index fingers. In addition, he was made to sign three different papers during the time in the police station, all written in Slovenian. Therefore, he couldn't understand what was written and the translator also didn't tell him. Also a photo of him was taken by a computer camera.

The translator asked the respondent several questions, e.g. with what intention he came to Slovenia. He answered:

*"I want to stay here. Yes. I want asyl."*

The translator responded:

*"What is the problem in Syria? Syria is no problem"*

To which the interviewee replied:

*"Are you crazy? Syria is not a problem? Are you sure Syria is not a problem?"*

The translator told him:

*"Yes, I am sure."*

The respondent then explained to him that he was a lawyer in Syria, and only left the country because he was forced to and that it was very dangerous.

The translator told him:

*"You can stay in Turkey. You can stay in Greece."*

Shortly thereafter, the interview ended and the translator went to talk to the officers in Slovenian. During this interaction, the respondent heard the translator deriding Islam in front of the officers, so he later told the officers:

*"I am muslim, but I am not Daesh (ISIS), I drink alcohol...I am open minded. I have money. I am not crazy."*

After the interview, he returned to the room where the other eight were waiting. The translator left at approximately 1 am.

The group spent the night in the police station. All nine of them slept on the floor in the same room and were each given one blanket. There was no toilet in the room, and they didn't have the possibility to use the bathroom, even though they asked for it. At around 3 am, they got a meal, consisting of a small piece of bread and a type of meat, supposedly pork. As Muslims, the nine individuals could not, and did not, eat the meat.

At around 6 am the next day, they were driven for around 1,5 hours from the police station to the Slovenian–Croatian border in a van and handed over to Croatian authorities who held them at a border station for some time. The respondent was able to use the bathroom in this building. In addition, he described having his Slovenian deportation papers ripped up by a Croatian officer at this point. This officer was around 60 years old, with short, white hair and a mustache and wearing a blue uniform as all other officers present.

The respondent described that as they left the Croatian border station, there were fifteen individuals inside the back of the van. In addition to the nine of them, there was now a number of Pakistani men with them. It took them very long to reach the Bosnian–Croatian border, approximately six hours:

*“He drove like crazy, stopped for five minutes, and went on one minute. Stop, and go. Stop, and go and stop and go”*

They finally arrived at the border around 3.30 pm and all people on the move were told to get off the van together. They were then encircled to be moved towards the Bosnian side of the border. There were four police cars present at the scene and approximately ten officers, all with uncovered faces.

They were pushed-back around 40 km south of Velika Kladuša. He remembered passing a sign which said precisely “Velika Kladuša – 40 km”. The people on the move then walked for twenty kilometers before being picked up by a car which took them the rest of the way to the IOM–run Miral camp near Velika Kladuša.

30/12/2018

## “HE DID NOT BEHAVE LIKE A TRANSLATOR, HE ACTED LIKE A POLICE OFFICER”

**Date and time:** December 30, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Vinica, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.46777038216011, 15.268548455139126

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: one 17 years old, others unknown , from: Iran, Syria, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 3 male and 1 female police officers, 1 police dog, later 4-5 police officers and 3 medium sized police cars, 1 police van; at the border 3 male police officers (with 3, 2 and 1 star)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 30th of December 2018, a group of 8 people-on-the-move were chain pushed back from Serbia to Croatia, then from Croatia directly further to Bosnia. They are from Syria, Iran, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan and Eritrea.

The group of seven left Velika Kladuša (BIH) on the January 23, 2019, and crossed the Croatian border with the intention of continuing to Slovenia. With them was a five-months pregnant woman and a 17-year-old minor. They walked for nine days through the forests, facing terribly cold weather, before reaching Slovenia. They crossed into Slovenia and continued approximately three kilometers further, up a mountain, before they were approached by a group of four Slovenian officers. Three of them were male, one female and a black dog was with them.

After the group was apprehended by the officers, they were led approximately two kilometers down the mountain where more officers were waiting with some police cars.

*"There was three police cars, medium size."*

When they arrived there, all their belongings were searched and shortly after, a police van arrived. They later watched their bags being thrown into the trash at the police station and never returned. Further, more than €400 was taken from them as well as their extra clothes and two power banks. These non-cash items were also thrown into the trash together with their bags.

*"They took our bags and threw them into the rubbish."*

One of the individuals was then taken by two officers with a car back to the river which they had crossed to enter Slovenia. The respondents believe that they took this specific individual because he was the only one speaking English and the officers wanted to find out the exact spot of crossing.

*"From where [did] you cross?"*

The individual explained that he was not able to tell them the location because after crossing over the nearby mountain, and then returning with the police car, he had lost track of his direction. As a response, one of the Slovenian officers kicked him.

*"[He] kicked me, two times. After three kicks, he told me 'If you lie [to] us, I kick you another time.'"*

This officer was tall, approximately 185 cm, with short hair and a clean shaved face, the individual called to mind. The other officer present tried to calm down his colleague at this point:

*"The other police officer told him 'Okay, okay.'"*

The individual was then driven back to the group and all seven had to enter the windowless van to be driven to a police station.

After a 30-minute drive, they arrived at the police station and were taken to a small room, one by one, and interviewed by a translator. They were further told to sign papers and to explain the reason for their presence in Slovenia:

*"One at a time, you write your name, take right index fingerprint, take picture, and then take you inside a small office room, after we finish talking, everyone is given a paper that they need to sign"*

Each of them was given a bracelet to wear after this process with a number on it. According to the respondents, a Palestinian translator arrived to the station approximately 30 minutes after they did. He stayed for around two hours, till around 1 and 3 pm.

One of the respondents expressed confusion and frustration in the way they were forced to interact with the translator. According to him, when they spoke to the translator, it was without the presence of an officer and the translator acted as if he himself was an officer:

*"He did not behave like a translator, He acted like a police officer. [He] asked me like police, not like a translator...He asked me alone ."*

The translator first asked, from which country he was from and why he came to Slovenia.

*"He told me 'Okay, so why do you come here?' and I told him 'Because I need asylum here' and he answered 'Why don't you apply asylum in Greece or Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia?'"*

Later the translator asked the respondent how he knew about Slovenia to which the respondent answered that he had heard about Slovenia in Bosnia:

*"He told me 'No! Many people here are liars, they come and then they go. You come, tell me the truth, where do you want to go? Which country? Do you want to go to Holland? To Germany? Where do you want to go?' He searched my phone...and he read my messages."*

The translator made the seven individuals open their phones and put in the codes, so he could read through their messages and contacts, telling them:

*"I want to see what you have."*

Several of them had Slovenian SIM cards, and he was particularly interested in finding out where they had obtained these from.

At the end of the interview, all seven of them were given a paper (see photo). Nonetheless, later in Croatia, these papers would be taken again from the majority of them and not given back.

All individuals asked for asylum in Slovenia during their interviews and were told consistently that they would not be able to receive asylum because:

*"You people, you always run."*

After around three hours at this police station, they were moved to another police station.

*"We went to another police station and we slept there, they gave us food and then in the morning they gave us food again."*

*"After [we left the first police station] we didn't see any way that the car goes because [they] closed up the car. Because you don't have windows, you see nothing, until the police station."*

Each two of them were kept together in a cell during the night with a small non-opening window, a toilet, a wooden bed, and a camera.

*"It looked like a jail."*

At 9 am the next morning, they were driven to the Croatian border together with an Iranian person. They arrived at the border at around 12 pm and had to stay at a border station for the majority of the day. At this station, they were told to sign several papers written in Croatian, a language none of them understood and no translator was present.

When the group was handed over to the Croatian authorities at the border check point, one of the latter officers asked one of the former officers who of the individuals could speak English. The Croatian officer then informed this individual:

*"Now you came in to Croatia, we don't want to harm you...we only take some information from you after that you go back."*

At the end, the respondent reported that the officers wanted to assure the group that they would not harm them. After this, they were taken to an office within the border station where everyone was asked for their names and photos were taken. They were also made to sign papers which had their personal details and information on it. They again didn't understand what they signed and again no translators were present.

Later, at around 9 pm, the group of now eight, had to enter another van and was driven to the Bosnian–Croatian border, where they arrived at around 11 pm. At the border, they discovered three male Croatian officers with stars on their shoulders. One had three stars one had two, and the other one only one star. Aside from this, the respondents also recalled seeing two female officers at the push-back site, who remained in some distance in a small car. The group was taken out of the van and told:

*"From here, Velika Kladuša is five kilometers, you go!"*

Before their push-back, the officer with the three stars on his shoulder told them that they would not beat the group:

*"I know which problems you have and why you come here, so no problem."*

The people on the move were surprised that they did not encounter any violence during their push-back:

*"Maybe [because it was] the New Year, they did not harm us, nothing or because three people [in our group were] old people."*

The group was pushed-back around 11.30 pm on December 31, 2019. It was New Years Eve and when they walked back to Velika Kladuša, they began to hear firework celebrations.

*"When we reach there, the New Year celebrations started."*

21/12/2018

## “THEY BEAT ME IN MY LEG AND IN MY BACK. IT HURT SO MUCH. ”

**Date and time:** December 21, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Vukovci, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.429706, 15.2146405

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 15, 20 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Around 10 Slovenian policemen (one of them female); Three male Croatian police officers (dark-blue uniforms with epaulettes and a white badge on their sleeves); Two cars in Slovenia (one of which not labeled as police car) and two cars in Croatia

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** Aid Brigade Sarajevo

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On December 17, 2018, the respondent, a Pakistani man, along with his 15-year-old friend (also from Pakistan) crossed the border from Bosnia to Croatia near Velika Kladuša (BiH), coordinates 45.173858,15.7583761. After four nights of walking, they reached the Slovenian border without having been detected by the Croatian authorities. In the morning of December 21, they entered Slovenia near Vukovci (SVN), coordinates 45.429706,15.2146405, by walking through the border river. The water was less than knee-deep, but very cold.

Only a few minutes after they entered Slovenia, they were caught by a group of four male officers and one female officer, wearing blue uniforms, in a white car with was not labeled as a police car. The officers made a call, and soon after two more officers arrived in a big white estate car, labeled as a police car. The two of them were driven by car for less than ten minutes to a police station. There, they were frisked and their phones and chargers was taken from them, though not their money. Their fingerprints were taken and they had to write down their names.

Both individuals stated that they wanted to claim asylum in Slovenia. An officer then checked the contents of the respondent's phone, i.e. the WhatsApp messages, GPS data, and conducted a computer search of maybe 20 minutes as the respondent recalled. The officer then said that the respondent couldn't receive asylum in Slovenia; he justified this by the fact that he had entered Slovenia before, the respondent asserted. The respondent received a report which he destroyed later on. By contrast, the case of his 15-year old friend was checked in more detail, and his friend stayed in the police station in Slovenia when the respondent was pushed-back; by the time of the interview, the respondent didn't have any information on the whereabouts of his friend.

After spending one night at the police station, the respondent was taken into an estate car and driven to the Croatian border. The Slovenian and Croatian officers talked to each other, and the former handed over the respondent's phone to their Croatian colleagues.

There were already six other people on the move with the Croatian officers and the group of seven was driven in two cars, one big estate car and one of the size of a regular passenger car, to the Bosnian border. They were accompanied by three officers with dark blue uniforms with epaulettes and a white badge on their sleeves.

The cars stopped at the border just after Maljevac (HRV), coordinates 45.1974968,15.7919508. The group of seven was told to get off and when they exited, all of them were beaten by three of the officers, shouting:

*"Go back, go back!"*

The officers also crashed the individual's phones and chargers.

*"They beat me in my leg and in my back. It hurt so much. They beat me with sticks."*

Afterwards, the Croatian officers handed over the seven of them to the Bosnian authorities. After a short talk between the Croatian and Bosnian officers, the latter told them:

*"Go back to your camp."*

The respondent then walked back to the camp in Velika Kladusa (BIH) some four kilometers from the border post.

**03/12/2018**

## **"L WAS WET EVERYWHERE, AND L FELT VERY COLD BUT THE POLICEMAN SAID, 'L DON'T CARE'"**

**Date and time:** December 3, 2018 23:00

**Location:** Maljevac, Croatia, between Maljevac and Buhača, at the border near Velika Kladuša

**Coordinates:** 45.1915532611543, 15.784667900524937

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 28 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 2 Slovenian officers in green uniforms, 2 officers in dark blue uniforms, 1 white van. 5 Croatian officers in black uniforms, black ski masks

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent left Velika Kladuša (BIH) by foot. At the border, he had to avoid barbed wire and had to cross a river by swimming through it. Once he reached Croatia, he took a taxi to the Slovenian border. He crossed the border, but the taxi driver drove too fast, overtaking other cars on the road, which attracted the authorities' attention, and they apprehended them by car. The officers forced the taxi driver to stop his car on the right side of the road and aimed their weapons at them. There were two officers in the car wearing what the respondent described as green military uniforms, and two other officers wearing dark blue uniforms.

Afterwards, the respondent was handcuffed. The officer asked for the passports of both of them, but the respondent didn't have one. The officers also asked them what they were doing together. After staying around 15 minutes on the edge of the road, they were driven to the police station in Brežice (SVN) in a white van with a windowless backspace (as described by respondent).

*"I was wet everywhere, and I felt very cold but the policeman said, 'I don't care', I went to a small cell and after one hour they came to do a frisk. Then I went to a big cell and I went to sleep. There was only one concrete bed with a mattress in the room"*

The day after, a Palestinian translator arrived to talk to them. He asked questions about the journey, the taxi, how much money he had paid and how he came to Slovenia. When the respondent asked to claim asylum, the translator answered:

*"No, no, why asylum?"*

He signed several papers and was kept in the station until approximately 9 am. From the police station, he was driven to a border police station. After signing further papers on the Slovenian side, he was transferred to Croatian authorities.

He stayed for ten hours at a Croatian border police station. During this time, he asked for food and water, but was denied both. He also asked to change his clothes which were still wet, but this was also refused.

Eventually, he was brought to a police van. The driver drove fast and the respondent was falling from one side to the other. There was no window in the backspace which made it impossible for him to orientate himself. They switched the cold ventilation on inside the van and the respondent in his wet clothes was very cold.

Around 11 pm, they arrived at the Bosnian–Croatian border, where five officers in black balaclavas and black uniforms were waiting. Two officers threw the respondent out of the van. He asked to be handled with care, explaining that he had a previous tear in one of his ligaments and a herniated disc which still was aching. When he showed his knee, he was told:

*"No, fuck off!"*

They were asking:

*"Where is the problem, where is the problem?"*

Then, they beat him with a baton exactly on his injuries. He couldn't walk for a while due to the pain in his leg, and some officers then pulled him away into the mud.

When he managed to leave, he lost his shoes in the mud. He walked back to Velika Kladuša wearing only socks in -1°C.

The officers gave him his destroyed phone back at the border but didn't return the €70 they had taken from him at the police station in Slovenia.

03/12/2018

## “AFTER [THE ELECTRIC SHOCK], L DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING. L WAS LIKE ASLEEP...LIKE DREAMING”

**Date and time:** December 3, 2018 08:00

**Location:** Bogovolja, Croatia, 27km away from Velika Kladuša at Bosnian-Croatian border

**Coordinates:** 45.09850756315853, 15.775096640966808

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 17, from: Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, electric shock, pouring water over one's head, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 8 Slovenian officers, several Slovenian prison officers, 2 police cars, 1 police van, several Croatian border officers, 12-13 Croatian officers wearing balaclavas, 1 police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Around November 25, 2018, the 17-year-old boy left Velika Kladuša (BIH) by foot with a family of five from Iraq and one other male. The family consisted of a father, a mother, and two minors under the age of 10. The respondent's arrangement with the family was that if the authorities would catch them, they would all say that he was the brother of the mother.

After walking for eight days through Croatia, they crossed the Slovenian border on the afternoon of December 2. The six of them walked for an additionally two or three hours when they encountered eight Slovenian officers, approximately 5 km away from the border. Intentionally, the group had tried to approach the officers as the family was very tired and wanted to apply for asylum in Slovenia. The family's intention was to be taken to a camp in Slovenia, so they wanted to get the attention of the police.

When they saw two police cars parked along the road from their position in a forest, the respondent approached them, heading towards the cars to alert them of his group's presence.

The officers present didn't speak much to the group since none of the people on the move spoke English well. After a while, a van arrived and the group was driven for approximately 30 minutes to a police station. At this police station, one of the children who spoke some English told the officers that they were hungry and shortly after, an officer arrived with biscuits and water for everyone in the group.

Afterwards, a translator entered and the family was taken into one room together, while the respondent was taken along with the other single male to another room. The translator was Palestinian with brunette hair, approximately 180 cm tall, having a shaved face, being approximately 45-years-old, and having tan skin. At some point during the respondent's interaction with this translator, the individual reported that he had an affiliation to Christianity.

At some point during the group's time at the police station, the informal arrangement which had been reached between the group members, that they would inform the authorities about the respondent being part of their family, began to break down. The eight of them were interviewed individually and while the respondent informed the officers that he was part of the family, the mother in the family reported that she was not related to him. Though, the family reported to the officers that the other single male was part of their family, but not the respondent. He previously had his fingerprints taken by officers in Slovenian, and supposes that this might have been the reason why the family wanted to distance themselves from him.

When the respondent had to speak to the translator, he was taken to a long room with four computers inside. There were four officers present, one who the respondent described as a "sergeant". The respondent was seated next to a table which had a computer on it. There was a fingerprint scanner next to the computer and a camera positioned next to him. During his interview with the translator, his right index finger was scanned by the machine. Likewise, he said the camera recorded their interview. Positioned in front of him on either side were the translator and one officer.

When the respondent began to talk to the translator, he was asked:

*"Why did you come to Slovenia?"*

*– "I want asylum."*

*"You are a liar! You are [just] saying [you] want asylum here. When we take you to the camp in Ljubljana, you [will just] go to Trieste or Germany."*

From this point, the translator began to accuse the respondent of lying about his age and telling him that he was not a minor:

*"I can't register you as a minor because I see your body, I see your face, [ and it's too] big."*

He was several times told that he was a liar, as he was not related to the family and wrongfully assumed he was not a minor. Aside from this, he was asked general identification questions during their interview, such as his country of origin, but he wasn't given any papers to sign:

*"They didn't give me any papers. They had my case, just my case with my photo and with my [finger]print."*

He then was detained for nine hours at the police station before he was driven for an hour in a van, in which he was the only passenger. They arrived at another location in Slovenia at around 1 am, which he described as a prison:

*"They took just me. Alone."*

At the entrance, his shoes and socks were taken from him, and he was then led barefoot into a prison cell with the number 8. The cell had a toilet, a sink, one small window and a bed which he slept on. He was the only person in his cell and remembered that when he arrived he was very hungry and therefore asked the officers if they could bring him any food, but never got any.

He stayed in the prison until the next half day before he was taken with a van to Slovenia, along with six Algerian people on the move and one person from Yemen.

He was then handed over to the Croatian authorities at a place which looked like an official border checkpoint. The Slovenian officers also handed over a bag with his phone and money to the Croatian authorities, but he never received it back. The now seven of them were held in a small room at this checkpoint for approximately seven to nine hours. This small room was just one of many rooms in the complex. He had to give his thumbprint and in addition, he had to write down his name on a piece of paper and hold it in front of his chest while a photo was taken. Until that point, he had still not eaten and reiterated to these new officers that he was hungry. They brought him some water, biscuits, and meat to eat.

The respondent supposes, that the seven of them were being kept at the border checkpoint to wait for the nighttime. After it was dark, around 8-10 pm, a van arrived, and they were driven for around 1,5 hours to a secluded area at the Bosnian–Croatian border, approximately 27 kilometers from Velika Kladuša.

At the border, the seven of them had to get off the van one by one. The officers would open the door, take one of the individuals out, close the door, and push them back to the Bosnian side of the border. During this period, the respondent could hear the others crying out loud every time they were hit by batons. This process then was repeated until only the respondent was left in the van. He had been listening to the screams of the other individuals and was scared to get off the van.

When he finally exited the van, he faced approximately twelve officers positioned in two lines leading to the border. Each of them was wearing black balaclavas and headlamps on their foreheads which blinded his eyes, and prevented him from seeing any distinguishing characteristics of the officers. He reported being hit by the first two with batons, forcing him to move forwards towards the other officers who hit him on his arms, shoulders, chest, and face. As he progressed down the line, the sixth officer took out a square shaped device which fit into his hand. He pushed it into the respondent's chest, giving him an electric shock.

*"After [the electric shock], I didn't see anything. I was like asleep...like dreaming."*

He then reported that one of the officers threw water onto his face from a bottle which woke him up.

*"When I woke up, the police hurt me in my hand and in my face."*

He tried to protect his face and head from several baton strikes with his hand and was hit several times on the forearm as a result. He would later find out that these strikes broke his forearm twice.

*"Au, my arm!"*

And the officers continued hitting him with batons on his legs instead. He also recalled receiving at least one direct punch from a closed fist to his face. At some point during the push-back, he fell down:

*"After the police hurt me, I couldn't walk. I was crawling on the ground and when the police saw me, they came to me and started kicking me in the legs."*

During this attack, the officers kept his phone, along with €250, and explained to him that this was the price of entering Croatia illegally.

Finally, he made it to the Bosnian side of the border, but the other six individuals who were pushed-back before him hadn't waited for him. He reported that he waited in the forest on the Bosnian side of the border for an hour, just sitting by himself to recover. When he got up and began walking, he saw a house which he approached and spoke to the owners. He told them that he needed help and asked if they would bring him to a hospital.

*"They didn't listen to me. They said: Go! Go!"*

So he walked back the 27 km to Velika Kladuša (BIH) on his own, which took him around seven hours.

**27/11/2018**

**““L WANT TO SEE [THE PERSON WHO DROWNED IN THE RIVER).” -“YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO SEE HIM.””**

**Date and time:** November 27, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Topolc, Croatia, place between Toploc and Rečica, close to the Reka river

**Coordinates:** 45.58265460491888, 14.22402077797085

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 11 person(s), age: 26 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Several Slovenian police officers, 2 police vehicles, 14 Croatian border officers (male and female), 6 Croatian officers in black uniforms and black ski masks, 1 police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of eleven crossed the border from Bosnia to Croatia by foot from Bihać on November 22. For five days, they continued walking to reach Slovenia. On November 27, having reached Slovenia, one officer saw them at a place between Topolc (SVN) and Rečica (SVN) and tried to apprehend them, but they all managed to run away. At this point, they were close to the Reka river, and one individual tried to cross it in an attempt to escape the officer. A second individual followed the first one into the river, however he didn't know how to swim, and was taken by the river's current. One of the others tried to save him, but also fell in the water.

Slovenian authorities arrived soon after and mounted a rescue attempt for the individual who was still in the river. When a Slovenian firefighter managed to take him out of the water, the respondent alleges that he had already passed away.

Three of the 11 had escaped during the group's initial flight from the officer and five others stayed along the river, including the three persons present in the interview.

*"We were walking and then a policeman saw us, and then we ran away to leave, there was a river [...] it was one guy he crossed it, he knew how to swim, and there was a second person, he went [in the river] but he didn't know how to swim [...]."*

The now seven of them had to enter two different vehicles. The individual who had tried to save his friend and one other individual were brought to a hospital where they stayed for about an hour. Then they were brought to a police station where the other group members were already waiting. This station was located about ten minutes from the place where their friend drowned. One of the respondents reported that:

*"The police station looks like a camp, there are bedrooms there. I think there is Red Cross around."*

They stayed approximately four hours at the police station. The officers weren't rude to them, however one of the respondents asked:

*"I want to see [the person who drowned in the river]."*

And the officer answered:

*"You have no right to see him."*

The group was then brought to an official border checkpoint between Slovenia and Croatia where they had to stay in a cell for two hours. There were about 14 male and female officers. The seven of them had to take off their clothes and had their bags checked, one by one in a different room. Their phones and money were taken away and photos of each were taken, wearing a panel with his name and surname on it. The photos were taken with a phone by a female officer. They further gave their fingerprints and signed a paper. Although it was written in Arabic, the respondents declared that they didn't have time to read it and therefore didn't know what they signed. One of the respondents described voicing concern over his injured foot at this time to an officer:

*"I showed my foot [to the policewoman and said:] 'Look, it's not good.' She answered me 'It's normal, you are men.'"*

They were later brought to a police van and driven to an unknown place to change the van, before being driven another 20 minutes to a secluded section of the Bosnian–Croatian border between Maljevac and Buhaua (HRV). The respondent stated that the area was close to where the October border protest was held. At approximately 1.40 am, the seven of them had to get off the van one by one. There were six officers waiting in front of the van while two others waited a bit further to catch those who might run away. They wore black balaclavas and black uniforms.

*“They beat us and were laughing, you go out of the van one by one and when you leave there is again two persons, then you run, you run until Bosnia. They beat everywhere, in the head, in the eyes, everywhere”*

They arrived to Velika Kladuša (BIH) by foot at around 2 am.

08/11/2018

## ““[YOU] FALL DOWN, AND THEN THE POLICE COME AND BEAT YOU””

**Date and time:** November 8, 2018 05:00

**Location:** close to route 218, Vinica, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.4614158, 15.253570999999965

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 19 person(s), age: 16-30 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Several Slovenian officers (one female), 10 -15 Croatian police officers, driver with black ski mask, 4 police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At the beginning of November 2018, a group of 30 left from an area between Bihać (BIH) and Velika Kladusa (BIH), approximately 25 km away from the latter city, with the intention to enter Croatia, continue to Slovenia and then to Italy. This group of 30 was split into several subgroups. One of those was a group of 14 where the two respondents were part of.

They walked for five days through Croatia and on the morning of the sixth day, on November 8, around at 5 am, they prepared to cross a river bordering Slovenia. Four Pakistani men who had joined their group during the journey, couldn't swim and stayed behind. The rest swam to the other side using plastic trash bags as flotation devices. Upon reaching Slovenian soil, close to the town of Vinica, route 218, they were apprehended by some Slovenian officers who had apparently spotted them from afar with binoculars. These officers also saw the four other men waiting on the Croatian side of the river and called the Croatian authorities to pick them up.

The group of now 13 was brought by car to a police station where they were made to fill out some papers without a translator. They asked for asylum but were denied access to the procedures. The 16 and 17-year-old respondents specifically stated in their paperwork that they were intending to apply for asylum in Slovenia, but the Slovenian officers said "No!" and crossed out their handwriting on the papers and instead filled in Italy as their intended destination. Furthermore, the officers claimed that everybody was over 18 and that there were no minors present. The 13 individuals spent one night in the jail in Slovenia. One of the officers present was around five feet tall, female, with brown shoulder-length hair and police code number 00448801.

On the next morning, November 9, they were taken to the Croatian border and handed over to the Croatian authorities around 10 am. In Croatia, they were taken to an unspecified place and all 13 were kept in a van for the entire day without receiving any food or water.

*"I told them all of these people are very hungry can you give us some food. The Croatia police tell me, give me money I give you food."*

Also, the individuals were forced to urinate into soda bottle, as they didn't get access to a toilet. Around 11.30 pm, they were finally driven to the Bosnian border in a convoy of three vans with approximately 30 people on the move in total. There was also one van joining them by the time they reached the border that transported only officers. Their driver wore a black balaclava.

It was already November 10, when they arrived at the Bosnia-Croatia border, close to the town of Sturlić (BIH), approximately 30 km from Velika Kladusa. The respondents saw the doors of their van opening, and then they were blinded by

flashlights pointing into their eyes. Three people had to get off together at one time and were beaten by the officers.

*"Three people, door close, fighting, fighting, finish. And another three people. Step-by-step."*

The respondents were unable to identify any distinguishing characteristics of the officers present due to the fact that during this process, flashlights continued to be pointed into their eyes. The officers also smashed their mobile phones, stole their power banks and more than €500 prior to the beatings. The officers were standing on each side of the road, in two long lines. The road had a downward incline and before the line of officers, there was a large drum of water being placed strategically to leak down the road, making the surface more slippery for the individuals being pushed-back:

*"The water came from a drum, water downhill, from drum, pouring downhill, and police on each side... They put the water down for slipping."*

One respondent slipped 10 times during the push-back. The officers waited for the people to slip and fall down, at which point they came and beat them up:

*"Fall down, and then the police come and beat you."*

They were forced to run through this line of officers, downhill on the slippery ground, for approximately 15 meters before they reached the safety of the forest on Bosnian territory. Flashlights were pointed into their eyes throughout this process.

The respondent described a family being present within the group of seven people being pushed-back, consisting of the mother, one child, and three men. He said that the officers didn't hit the woman of the family, only the men.

The respondent was hit on his eyes the front and back of his head, his legs, and on his arms. When he got out of the van, he was first running and then slipping several times. After that, three officers held him, while two officers beat him with batons. While hitting the people on the move with their fists and batons, the officers shouted:

*"Go! Go! Go!"*

After finally reaching the forest, the respondent collapsed and couldn't stand up for 10 minutes due to exhaustion.

*"I jump for jungle, 10 minutes I am sleeping here."*

After exiting the forest on the Bosnian side, the group came upon a man who told them that he would take them to Velika Kladusa for €10 per person. They only had 20 euros left at this point, but the man accepted and took them.

**29/10/2018**

## **"THEIR PHONES AND MONEY WAS TAKEN AND NEVER RETURNED"**

**Date and time:** October 29, 2018 23:00

**Location:** Metlika, Slovenia, at a bridge at the Croatian-Slovenian border

**Coordinates:** 45.6349582, 15.3228422

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 24-29 , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 6 officers in uniform, 2 dogs, 2 cars,

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Aid Brigade Sarajevo

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of four men started their journey in Velika Kladusa. They crossed the border to Croatia and walked for four days until they reached a bridge at the Slovenian border at night.

After crossing this bridge, the Slovenian officers stopped them and sent them back to the Croatian authorities.

The four of them were put in a Croatian prison, where they had to stay for one night. There, the officers beat them and then searched them twice. Their phones and money was taken and never returned. Throughout, the Croatian officers insulted them, laughed at them and told them to go back to their country. They also accused the four of them of smuggling, without providing any evidence.

The next day at 10 am, a van arrived and brought them back to the Bosnian border near Bihać. From there, they walked back to Bihać camp.

26/10/2018

## ““AND I CAN'T TELL YOU THE FEELINGS OF THAT NIGHT””

**Date and time:** October 26, 2018 12:00

**Location:** near Strojopromet, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 45.18553, 15.815198

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 19-30 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Several Slovenian officers, 25-30 Croatian officers in black uniforms and masks, with batons. One was shaved, another one had a mustache and a beard, 2 police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

*The respondent left together with* 40 men by foot from Bihac (BIH), crossed Croatia, and continued to Slovenia. After seven days of walking through Croatia, they reached Slovenia, from where they were supposed to be picked up by two taxis that were organized by some smugglers. The smuggler had not specified the time when he would meet them, so they were waiting in a Slovenian forest at the prearranged spot for five days. They ran out of food and water at some point and the respondent didn't feel well.

On the fifth day, two vans finally picked them up. The respondent was being transported in the backspace of one van together with 19 individuals of the original group. When they were around 4 km far from the Italian border, they were stopped by the Slovenian authorities. The van's driver immediately ran away and left them inside the car. The Slovenian officers were treating the men with respect when they caught them and transported them to a police station. At the police station, the Slovenian officers questioned them about their nationality and their intentions in Slovenia:

*“The Slovenian police were asking us where we are from etc. I have the paper from Slovenia [the fine]. They said that I have a fine that I have crossed the border illegally, but if you can't pay it, it is OK, we will not request it from you. The behavior of Slovenian police was very good.”*

They were also provided with the help of a translator from Pakistan at the station. They spent one day in custody, and were afterwards transported to Croatia and handed over to the Croatian officers, who were also treating them with respect. In the end, the men were finally taken to the Bosnian border, where they

were told to switch to a different car, driven by a different group of officers. Now, the Croatian border authorities were in charge of their deportation back to Bosnia. This Croatian officers drove them to a remote area close to the official border check-point in Maljevac (HRV).

Once they arrived there, they opened the door of the van and started pointing a flashlight to the individual's faces. The officers ordered them to get off the van one by one, pointing the flashlight in their eyes just before they would exit. Thus, they couldn't see anything when they stepped outside. Following, the officers physically attacked them. The respondent struggled to see from where the officers were attacking him from, as he had got blinded by the flashlight and the officers wore black uniforms.

*"We were 20 in one van. They [Croatian border police] said to us to come one by one. They opened the door, one guy came out, they closed the door and we just hear the voices "oooo". They were in the shape of groups in five or six [police]. One group was standing near the van, one group little far from the van, another group also far from the van. Two police men hold one guy, put him down on the ground, then after, they started beating him. After three or four minutes, they said to him: "Go Italia! If you want to go to Italia, go to Italia! No go Bosnia, there is Bosnia!". But after when he was walking away, the other group [of police men] caught him and they beat him again. After that when the second group of police let us go, the third group caught us and started beating us again .... I could not run anywhere, they were everywhere in front of us ... One guy was telling them: "My arm is broken, my arm is broken!", but they did not leave him. They were laughing at us. When they were beating us, they were laughing ... You can see on my back I have lines after hit".*

The Croatian authorities also took the individual's bags, all their phones, money, and power banks.

After he arrived at the Bosnian side of the border, the respondent walked back to the makeshift camp in Velika Kladuša. He was struggling to walk as he was injured on his chest and legs:

*"I was on a hill, and I fell from the top on my chest. I also had pain in my back and front and could see that the blood is coming from inside. I felt like I was drunk. I fell, and I was alone, I had no phone, and was thinking how to contact my friends now and take some taxi? My legs were shaking, so I could not walk. When I came down, no one was on the road. I needed a water. Nothing was in my pocket. One guy came to that road, and I begged him to give me water, and he gave me water. After, he went inside of a bar and I walked. I never forget this moment of my life. That was the first time, I am 22, but this night was very dark night for me. My chest hurt me like somebody shoot me on my chest. And I can't tell you the feelings of that night".*

At the end of the interview, the respondent mentions that during this attempt to reach asylum in the EU, he had lost all his last money. Now, he struggles to move forward from the Bosnian transit, where he lives under a plastic sheet shelter in the camp in Velika Kladuša (BIH). At the same time, he can't return to Pakistan, back to a life in poverty:

*"They [Croatian border police] took everything from us. They did not give us our bags and I had everything in my bag. If we belong to the strong family, we would not have to come here. But we are not financially strong, so that is why we came here. You know, in Pakistan, you work for 5 to 6 euros per day. In Europe, maybe it is 50 euros. You need – 3 euros for your food. What do you give to your family? How much money my family can send me [now]? I have already lost 2.300 euros in Bosnia because I paid to agent [smuggler]"*

23/10/2018

## “THE POLICE OFFICER WHO WAS BEATING ME BROKE HIS STICK [BATON] ON ME”

**Date and time:** October 23, 2018 05:00

**Location:** Remote area near Maljevac, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.2010151, 15.785225800000034

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 32 person(s), age: unknown , from: Bangladesh

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian officers, Croatian officers in black uniforms and masks, 2 police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent walked in a group of 32 men from Velika Kladuša (BIH) to Croatia, and from there to Slovenia.

When the group was crossing the road A1, they were caught by three Slovenian officers. They asked them to show their identification documents, but they didn't have any. Then, they searched their bags and frisked their bodies but didn't take any of their belongings.

The respondent told the officers that he wanted to stay in Slovenia, apply for asylum and work there. But the officers only responded:

*“No, no, no”.*

Following that, all 32 were transported to a police station, where they were detained in a cell for one night.

The Slovenian officers were treating them with respect, giving them new clothes, water and food. Their fingerprints and photos were taken. For the respondent, it was the second time being arrested in Slovenia, so once the officers had taken his fingerprints, they could find the information about his previous detention. They asked the 32 individuals to sing eight papers, but because they were written in Slovenian and there was no translator present, they didn't understand them. Only two 18-year-old individuals of their group were able to access the asylum procedure and were later transported to an asylum accommodation. The following day, the rest of them, including the respondent, were transported to the Croatian border and handed over to the Croatian authorities. They were picked up by two vans there and driven to the Bosnian border.

*“There was no light inside the car, we were sitting in total darkness. And with so many people.”*

Twenty people were squeezed in each van's backspace. Once they arrived at the border, close to the official border check point of Maljevac (HRV), they were told to get off the van, one by one. When they started running towards Bosnia, they fell over ropes, which the authorities had set as a trap. Once they fell on the ground, they were severally attacked with batons.

*"When we came to the border, they [police officers] took different position, standing in several lines. When people came outside, one by one, they made a trap; they put a rope in the way and when people were running outside of the hill, they fell because there was a rope. And when we fell, from jungle, the police came with big sticks and started beating us. When we crossed the trap [the rope], they were beating us again. [...] The police officer who was beating me broke his stick [baton] on me. They were big men with masks."*

They then walked back to the makeshift camp in Velika Kladusa (BIH), where they temporarily live. All of them had scratches around their bodies caused by their falls and baton attack. Below is the photo of the medical report.

07/10/2018

## "[...] THERE IS NO ASYLUM HERE. YOU AREN'T A CATHOLIC, YOU'RE A MUSLIM. GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY"

**Date and time:** October 7, 2018 00:00

**Location:** near Sušak, Sovenien

**Coordinates:** 45.4879586, 14.3272540000000039

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: unknown , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, lack of oxygen in van's backspace, breathing problems

**Police involved:** Two Slovenian officers, one woman and one man, wearing police uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of three was walking from Velika Kladuša (BIH) to Croatia, and further to Slovenia, where they wanted to apply for asylum in Ljubjana. The fifth day, when they were walking in a forest between the villages Susak (SVN) and Rupa (SVN), Slovenian officers, one woman and one man, wearing police uniforms detected them. They treated the three people on the move like criminals, giving them orders like:

*"Sit! Stand! Move!"*

The three individuals told the officers that they wanted to apply for asylum in Slovenia, but the police responded:

*"You are a Muslim. Living in a good Country. There is no asylum here. You aren't a Catholic, you're a Muslim. Go back to your country. What are you doing here? You are not regular, this is the big problem here."*

Then, all of them were transported with a car to the police station in Lisac – Susak (SVN), where they were detained for one day. At the police station, they were provided a translator, an older man from Palestine, who refused to help them to access the asylum procedure:

*"He [the translator] was just sitting there and did not speak. Just sit. Just asked us for our names and country and where from we crossed the border and what time. I asked him for asylum. He told me just "Silence". When I asked them to translate that I need asylum, and he told me: "No asylum here. No talk about this. No asylum in Slovenia, Go back to Bosnia."*

The following day, before they were transported to Croatia, they got a paper to sign, which they didn't understand because it was written in Slovenian. They were told by the officers to sign the paper anyway. Later they found out, that the paper was declaring that they had to pay a fee €200 each for irregularly entering Slovenia:

*"They gave me all these papers, but not in English, Arabic or French. I did not understand. I asked the police man: Can I ask you, can you get me this paper in Arabic? He told me: 'You can't. Just sign.'"*

The three of them were then transported to a police station close to the Croatian border, where they were detained for two days in a small room, similar to a cell, which was already crowded with other people on the move. They got only one food during the whole time of their detention.

After two days, they were handed over to the Croatian authorities, who transported them together with other seven men to the Bosnian border. They were driven only for a few hours to some location, where they were detained inside the car for ten hours.

All of them had problems to breath inside of the car because there was no ventilation, resulting in lack of oxygen. Around 2 am, the car started to move again, and they were driven to an unmarked forest location at the Bosnian border next to a river, around 10 km away from Velika Kladuša (BIH).

When they arrived at the border, they were told to get off the car and found some officers in black uniforms and balaclavas and equipped with batons and guns waiting for them. These officers first broke their phones and stole their money:

*"They were policemen with masks. They told us: 'Five persons come out. Who can speak English?' My friend and me can speak English. I told him that I need my phone and my money. He gave me a plastic bag and said that this was my phone. I opened the plastic bag and found mine and the others' phones broken. And no money. One man has lost 1300 Euro."*

Then, they attacked all of them with batons and kicks, while shouting at them to go back to Bosnia, and started shooting around with their guns:

*"They had masks. I don't understand. They had guns and ta ta ta ta, for maybe just telling me to move. But where I could move? There was just a forest. They shot around me maybe twenty times. Maybe for making me move. But where I move? I did not see anything."*

*"They were acting like animals. They his you, no respect. In the night, not able to see anything. But I am not a criminal, not a terrorist, just an immigrant. They twisted my finger."*

Afterwards, all of them slept outside and later walked back to the camp in Velika Kladuša. The individual who was robbed by the authorities was crying because he had no more money left.

01/10/2018

## **"THOSE TOOK THEM WITH A CAR WHERE THEY SAT CRAMPED AND HAD THEREFORE DIFFICULTIES TO BREATHE"**

**Date and time:** October 1, 2018 00:00

**Location:** a forest at the Slovenian-Croatian border near Rupa, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.48926092988004, 14.278106689453125

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: Unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** destruction of personal belongings, sitting cramped resulting in difficulties to breath

**Police involved:** Several Slovenian officers, several Croatian officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Aid Brigade Sarajevo

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

Some Slovenian officers detected the two families in a forest on the Slovenian side of the border with Croatia, close to Rupa (HRV). They arrested them, denying them their right to claim asylum. The officers made them undress and body-searched the men in front of all other members of the families, including the women and children.

Then, they were driven to the Croatian border and handed over to the Croatian authorities. Those took them with a car where they sat cramped and had therefore difficulties to breathe.

The two families repeatedly asked the officers for asylum but were denied due to the reason that they had illegally entered the country. Additionally, their requests for water and food were denied. Then the officers drove them to the Bosnian border and dropped them off near Bihac (BIH).

When they arrived at the border, the officers broke all their phones and ordered them to walk back to Bosnia, threatening them to never return to Croatia again.

**18/09/2018**

## **“LAY DOWN OR I SHOOT!”**

**Date and time:** September 18, 2018 01:00

**Location:** Stara Cerkev, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.712329970805875, 14.906216060098814

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 26 person(s), age: 17-60 , from: Pakistan, Iran, India

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 3 Slovenian officers with a van. Croatian officers dressed in sky blue border uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group was caught on September 16, 2018, by the authorities in Slovenia, around 10 km far from the Croatian border.

The 13 individuals, including two minors and one elderly person, were walking through the forest. After several days of traveling, they were crossing a stretch of gravel parking and, what they described as a Slovenian officer, approached them. As it was dark, on the evening of September 16, 2018, the group couldn't see the officer very well. The respondent could anyway hear him shouting aggressively in English:

*“Lay down or I shoot!”*

The group complied and waited on the ground as the officer circled them, reportedly continuing to aim his pistol at them. Then, the officer called for backup and after some minutes a van arrived with two more officers. When the group was searched, all their belongings were taken away. Then, they had to enter the police van and were driven to a nearby police station. There, the supposed Slovenian officers forced them to sign deportation documents which were all written in Slovenian. The individuals didn't have access to a translator and when they asked for asylum in Slovenia the officers simply ignored them.

Two minors were present, but the police coerced them to sign as adults. The individuals also gave their fingerprints and personal details. Around 6,5 hours later, they were brought with a van to the Croatian border. The Slovenian officers drove them until a concourse area of a large road crossing, between

Slovenia and Croatia. There, the Croatian officers were already waiting for the men. The respondent stated that they had to stay in makeshift cells made out of containers. They asked again for asylum in Croatia, but the Croatian officer simply ignored the request as well. They were dressed in sky blue uniforms and processed the individuals by taking their names and ages. Again when the two minors stated that they were 17, they were forced to sign papers for adults while the officers called them "motherfuckers".

They were locked in a cell all together for around ten hours. The group passed the night without food and water and at some point were forced to pay the officers to buy them food. They had to drink water from the toilet in the cell. After the confinement the 14 men were loaded into one Croatian van were and driven for 4,5 hours. They got all sick from the drive, due to the heat inside the backspace, the lack of oxygen and the cramped space.

Once the van stopped, the group was released at a rural border spot next to a river. It was past midnight on September 18 as the capture and push back had altogether taken three days. The individuals were frightened, tired and sick. The doors of the van were opened, and they faced four officers waiting for them at the border, wearing blue uniforms consistent with those of Croatian police and black balaclavas.

*"You could just see their eyes."*

The officers beckoned them out one by one and started to beat them. Two more officers joined from the side of the car. During the beating one officer fired his gun into the air just above the individual's heads. Once the individuals were laying on the ground, the six officers circled them and beat them heavily with their batons.

One Iranian man was summoned from the van at the start of the violence. The officers gave him a plastic bag full of broken phones and as soon as he held out his hands to take it, they began to strike him heavily and shouted at him. The minors were also beaten alongside the adults and one of the 17-year-old boys lost his shoe during the assault. None of their belongings, beside the broken phones were returned. The respondent had his medical certificates, personal documents and family contacts stolen. He had a very high level of spoken English and was therefore able to request for the items back. When the officers heard him, they refused to return his belongings, but he described how they stopped hitting him because:

*"If they know someone can speak English, they don't beat that person because they [Croatian officers] can pass the information [about border violence]."*

**13/09/2018**

## **" THE CAR WAS DRIVING VERY FAST, SOME PEOPLE WERE VOMITING"**

**Date and time:** September 13, 2018 03:00

**Location:** Crnotice, Slovenia, 10 km far from Italian border

**Coordinates:** 45.560391, 13.914747

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 17-24 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 5 Croatian border officers, wearing black clothes

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of five men were walking for ten days in total, first through Croatia and then through Slovenia, after they had left Velika Kladuša (BIH). When they were in the Slovenian interior, 10 km away from the Italian border, they were detected by Slovenian officers. They took their power banks, chargers, money, and the new phones from some of them. They told them that they would return their belongings to them later, which they didn't. After that, they were driven by a van to a police station in Slovenia, where they were detained for 24 hours. At the station, they all asked for asylum in Slovenia, but got the response:

*"In Slovenia, asylum is closed."*

The next day, the five of them were transported with a small car to Croatia. They were handed over to the Croatian officers and then transported by a big van to the Croatian border officers:

*"The Croatian van was very big. There were no windows, it was a criminal car. The car was driving very fast, some people were vomiting. Sometimes, there was oxygen and sometimes it was closed. There were two fans. But this is very pressure."*

Close to the Bosnian border, they had to switch to another Croatian van from the border officers who were in charge of their push back to Bosnia. The van stopped close to Sturlic (BIH), and five border officers told them to get off the van. First, the officers broke their phones with a gun and then started to attack them physically:

*"They [police] made a row. Three [officers] standing on the right site and others on the left site. They said to us two people to come out of the car and once they were out, they closed the car, and they were beating us while we were walking through that row. And after, another people. Beating with rubber stick. They were beating me to my back and front site. They don't care where, they just beating ... they said to us: 'Do not come back, not come back!'"*

The respondent has been stuck in Bosnia for four months and claims he has tried to reach Europe during this time five times. He reports that he has been beaten, robbed, and pushed back to Bosnia each time.

10/09/2018

## “THE RESPONDENT HAD PAID A TAXI FROM BELGRADE TO ARRIVE DIRECTLY TO ITALY [...]”

**Date and time:** September 10, 2018 08:00

**Location:** close to Kocevje, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.6409009, 14.863312800000017

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 24-53 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting

**Police involved:** Some Slovenian and Croatian male officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent had paid a taxi from Belgrade to arrive directly to Italy, but after he crossed the Croatian-Slovenian border, the driver left him on the way, and he didn't know where he was. There, he met another individual who asked him to join a small group of six he had never seen before.

The group of then seven was walking during the night, somewhere close to Kocevje (SLN), when suddenly some officers, probably Slovenian ones, stopped them in a forest. After 30 minutes, some other officers brought a lot of people on the move they had previously arrested to the same spot that now looked like a meeting point. All of them were then taken to a police station to be registered and to give their fingerprints. No documents were given to them.

After that, the group of seven was taken to the Slovenian-Croatian border with a van where they were handed over to some Croatian officers with another van. The seven individuals were cramped into a container next to a Croatian police station for the rest of the night. They couldn't see the name of the place where they were.

On the next morning, the officers put them in a van again. Two of the individuals expressed how they didn't want to be taken back to Bosnia again, and as an answer, the officers beat them with a baton.

Then they pushed them back to Bosnian, more or less 20 km from Bihac (BIH), next to Lohkovo.

05/09/2018

## “THEY IMMEDIATELY ARRESTED HIM, DESPITE HIS ASYLUM STATUS AND THE FACT THAT HE WAS STAYING IN THE ASYLUM FACILITY”

**Date and time:** September 5, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 46.054214385285626, 14.507403457403598

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** Slovenian Police, 4 Croatian officers in sky blue shirts

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Balkan Info Van

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 16th. 2018, a person on the move traveling alone, was arrested in Slovenia. Having already been processed and fingerprinted in Slovenia he was brought to a police station and then transferred to an open asylum centre on the edge of the capital, Ljubljana. At this stage the individual was able to resume his asylum status in Slovenia and having signed some documents, was given a temporary asylum card. The man stayed in the open facility for nine days.

On the following Monday (27th) at around midday, he was walking through the centre of Ljubljana. He was spotted near the bus station by Slovenian police. They immediately arrested him, despite the individual explaining his asylum status (and that he was in fact staying in the asylum facility).

The man describes that he was taken to a closed detention centre, where he was kept for ten days. On September 5th. 2018 the man was taken by Slovenian police and driven by car to the border of Croatia. Here, he was handed over on foot by two officers to a combi van parked on the Croatian side of a motorway customs area. He then spent around 6 hours in the back of the combi, before arriving at the border crossing to Bosnia near Sturlic. Here the police, four Croatian officers dressed in sky blue shirts, were waiting for the combi. As he left the van they beat him with police issue black batons. They hit him for several minutes and then told him to make his own way back across the border to Bosnia.

03/09/2018

## “WHEN THEY ASKED FOR ASYLUM THE OFFICERS REPLIED SIMPLY - NO”

**Date and time:** September 3, 2018 16:00

**Location:** Slovenia, Obrov

**Coordinates:** 45.54066555061931, 14.087015168210996

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: unknown , from: India, Nigeria, Ivory Coast

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** four Slovenian police officers wearing blue uniforms, Croatian police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 10 men on the move had been walking for two weeks before they were caught on September 2nd. 2018. Four Slovenian police officers wearing blue uniforms apprehended the men near Obrov, Slovenia. Two police officers took their pistols out of their holsters, and told the group to stop.

The men were told to sit down while they were searched. All of their belongings were taken. Then the group was transported in a police van for about half an hour, to a highway. They were taken out of the van in the early evening. They had been transported to a motorway border crossing, on the frontier between Slovenia and Croatia. On the Slovenian side the men were interrogated at a police station, giving their names and photographs to the officers as well as their nationality, paternal name and age. When they asked for asylum the officers replied simply “no”.

Afterwards the Slovenian police escorted them in silence across the tarmac area, handing them over to a detachment of Croatian border police (identified by their lapels) who wore blue uniforms. In the custody of the Croatian police, the group was immediately taken to a container by the side of the border crossing. The room was unfurnished, with only one toilet and the men were locked in it overnight without food and water. One man described how he had to pay the Croatian police officers to buy them something from a shop. He used his own money (which had already been confiscated). In the morning they were woken up and taken outside onto the concourse of the border crossing.

A Croatian police combi-vehicle was waiting for them and deported them at approximately 10:30. All ten men were loaded into the back, despite the lack of space and bad air. The van drove for around 5 hours. At one point all men of the group were feeling physically sick and everyone was vomiting.

They were let out at a border location to the east of Velika Kladusa. The rural spot was familiar to some of the men from previous push backs from Croatia. At the border the police officers told them to walk back to Bosnia. One of the group asked for his phone to be returned but the officer simply took it and broke it in front of him by removing the battery and scratching the contact point for the sim (irreparable damage see pictured below). The officers further took 100 euros, that had been seized from another person, and tore it in half in front of the men. At this point it was around 16:00 and the group had to walk back until late at night, without the money for a bus.

**21/08/2018**

## **“THEY KICKED INTO OUR BACK, NECK AND LEGS - THEY FRACTURED MY HAND WITH THEIR FOOT”**

**Date and time:** August 21, 2018 16:00

**Location:** Near Črnomelj, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.56309250591816, 15.153831017353696

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 17, other ages unknown , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Six women police and 7 men (Slovenian) wearing blue uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The main respondent for the testimony of this incident was the 17 year old son of the family involved.

The whole family of three people from Iran started walking from Bosnia, crossed Croatia and wanted to continue to Slovenia, where they wished to apply for asylum. After six days of walking, predominantly through forests and mountain terrains, the family crossed the Croatian-Slovenian border. Around fifteen kilometres from the border, the family was walking in a forest close to the town called Črnomelj where they were seen by a man on a motorbike, who called the police. The family noticed the man calling the police and wanted to escape but the local people surrounded them and did not let them leave until the police arrived.

The respondent explained that soon after, six female and seven male police officers wearing blue shirts arrived. The family experienced that the police would not listen to them, and they were not allowed to explain their situation. The respondent explained that he initially told the police that they were from Syria and not from Iran, because he was worried that they would have labelled them and treated them as “illegal migrants” and not “refugees”. The police officers told the family to lie on the ground and searched their bodies. They found 1000 euros hidden in the mothers underwear (bra), took the money and did not return it. One officer told the son to tell him the pin code for the phone, so that he could search through the phone. When the son refused to do so, the officer physically attacked him, and after started attacking his mother and father also:

*They put us to the ground and they were kicking into me. But not only into me, but also my mother and father. Into our back and neck and legs. They said not to speak. They fractured my hand with their foot [kicks].*

After the physical attacks, the whole family was transported to a police station. The son told the police that he had a lot of pain in his arm caused by the attack by the police officers that happened a few minutes before and asked the officers if he could seek medical treatment. The son was then transported to the hospital in Vinica, where he was treated by a local doctor. The doctor diagnosed the respondent with a fractured front arm and gave him a provisional hand splint and bandage, but did not provide him with a medical report. After that, the son was transported back to the police station where his parents had been detained.

At the police station, the officers took the fingerprints of all family members, photographed them, and asked them to fill a document with their names, age, nationality and their intentions in Slovenia (which was written in the Farsi). The son explained to the police that him and his family wanted to apply for asylum in Ljubljana and asked the police whether he and his parents could access the asylum procedures. The police called an Arabic translator to help the family to understand their questions, but the family told them that their mother tongue was Farsi and not Arabic. The son explained that he had limited understanding of the Arabic language and could not speak Arabic. For this reason, none of the family members understood the Arabic translator properly, which made their legal procedure impossible to understand and complete. Afterwards, the police gave the family a paper to sign that they did not understand:

*We signed some paper. But they did not let us read it. They just put it in front of us and told us to sign it very fast and afterwards they took it back. We did not even read it. First, they brought some papers in Farsi, name, first name, last name. But the papers we signed we did not know what it was. And after they deported us to Croatia.*

The family was pushed back first to Croatia and then from Croatia to Bosnia. The transport was difficult, the mother stated that the van in which they were being deported did not have any windows or a fan, so the inside was very hot and they had difficulties breathing. The Croatian police stopped on the way to have lunch and left the family waiting for three hours in the van. According to all family members, the Croatian police otherwise treated them with respect, did not steal or destroy any of their possessions, and did not physically or verbally attack them. The Croatian police only drove the family to the Bosnian border, around 20 kilometres away from Velika Kladuša, where they told them to walk back to Bosnian territory.

The 17 year old son, was treated in the hospital in Vinica by the local doctor who concluded that he had a fractured arm (photo 1). The doctor gave him a provisional hand split and bandaged his arm but did not provide him with a medical report.

The mother had pain in her neck, back, and leg caused by the physical attack by a Slovenian police officer. She had a visible bruise on her left knee caused by several kicks by the Slovenian officers (photo 2).

The father had several bruises on his right ankle from the assault by the police officers (several kicks – photo 3).

**For an interesting correspondence with the Slovenian police about this report, click here:**  
<https://www.borderviolence.eu/a-letter-from-the-slovenian-police/>

19/08/2018

**“ONE PERSON WAS TORTURING US BY SHINING THE LIGHT INTO OUR EYES AND THE OTHER FIVE WERE BEATING US, ONE BY ONE.”**

**Date and time:** August 19, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Close to Zagreb - Road 1, Croatia.

**Coordinates:** 45.640470568050794, 15.398516700995174

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: 18-45 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Croatian police officers, 1 female and 5 male

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent walked with other 21 men from Velika Kladuša (BiH) to Croatia and wanted to cross further to Slovenia. After eight days of walking, the whole group reached the Slovenian border, where they were caught by the Slovenian border officers. The officers talked to the men politely and asked them to go back to Croatia. The men decided to walk back to Bosnia.

When they were passing Route 1, close to Zagreb, they were caught by the Croatian police – five men and one woman. These officers took the men into a big van with the intention to push them back to Bosnia. The men were transported inside of the van for about 3 hours. Inside of the van was no light and a lack of oxygen, so that all of them had problems to breath inside. According to the respondent, the police was driving very fast, and later on, he could smell alcohol from some of the officers, so he assumed that the driver was drunk.

The van stopped on a road, close to the Bosnian border, close to the official border check-point in Velika Kladuša, around 3am. The men were told to get out of the van and they were robbed and attacked:

*They stole 1000 euros from all of us, broke our power banks, after they took us on the road and beat us. They were beating us with batons on the shoulders, back, head and to my private parts. We all never know where they hit, in the dark night, they can hit hard, and not only one person. Now, everything is broken. They can hit everywhere, YOU NEVER know where. One person was torturing us by shining the light into our eyes and the other five were beating us, one by one.*

The respondent stated that the police also broke all of their phones (22 in total). After the violent incident, the whole group walked back to the makeshift camp in Velika Kladuša.

**16/08/2018**

**“HE ASKED THE POLICE IF HE COULD APPLY FOR ASYLUM AND HAD PREPARED THE DOCUMENTS PROVING THAT HE WAS PERSECUTED BY ISIS IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT THE POLICE REFUSED TO SEE IT”**

**Date and time:** August 16, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Near Cirknik, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.86331307291192, 15.62642349334942

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride

**Police involved:** Slovenian and Croatian police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent in this incident explains that he left Velika Kladuša with 12 other men, all from Afghanistan, crossed Croatia and wanted to continue further to Slovenia. When the group had been walking inside of Slovenia for about 24 hours, they were detected by the Slovenian police. According to the respondent the police took the group of people to a police station, where they investigated their country of origin and other identifying features. The respondent and the other men were also given a bracelet with a number, on which base they were called by the numbers instead of their names by the police. The respondent asked the police if he could apply for asylum and had prepared the photo copy of the documents proving that he was persecuted by ISIS in Afghanistan, but the police refused to see it:

*I have all of my documents, education and degrees, service, ID cards in my phone. In 1992, I received gold medal from John Allan, out of 2000 people, I still have my medal, I showed already the photos to the police. But they did not allow us to show them the proof. They did not care to see it. I wanted to show them, but they did not allow me to show them*

All the men spent 24 hours in the police station and afterwards they were transported to Croatia, and from there to Bosnia. The men were transported from Croatia to the Bosnian border by a van with no windows. The inside of the van had an extremely hot temperature, described by the men as the inside of a "cooking pressure pot". The men were dropped off near the Bosnian border where they were told to go back to Bosnia. They walked 25 km back to Velika Kladuša.

15/08/2018

### "THEY WERE BEATING ME FOR TEN MINUTES WITH STICKS AND THEIR HANDS"

**Date and time:** August 15, 2018 00:00

**Location:** forest close to Stara Lipa, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.46682683560941, 15.231725833934775

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

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

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** two Slovenian male police officers working in a police station 20 min by drive from Stara Lipa

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 15th. 2018, the respondent and 9 other men, including two minors, walked from Velika Kladuša, crossed Croatia, and wanted to continue through Slovenia further to Italy. The interviewees report that, when the whole group was walking in a forest close to Stara Lipa around 6 pm, they were caught by a group of 11 police officers. The officers questioned the men about their nationalities and called for more police officers and a van, which later transported all the men to a police station. The interviewee did not know the location of the police station because the car in which they were being transported had dark windows and the police did not give the men any information about where they were being transported. The interviewee only remembered that the police station where they were taken, was a 20 minute drive from the place of their apprehension (Stara Lipa).

Once, the men arrived at the police station, they had to fill out a document, stating their name, parents' names, their nationality and their intention of movement in Slovenia. The respondent was the only one who did not express his intention to stay in Slovenia and apply for asylum there. Instead, he told the police that he wanted to continue to Italy. After that, the police took their fingerprints. Based on the fingerprinting process, the police found out that this was the respondents fourth time entering Slovenia, and accused him of being a smuggler. The two police officers took him to a closed container inside of the police station, where he reports that they were verbally threatening him and physically attacking him:

*They took me to container. Two women police were sitting on the chair and two men started beating me. They were beating me for ten minutes with sticks and their hands. But you know, they were beating me not hard, to not to leave any marks on my body. And those two women were just sitting there and watching. The men who were beating, were calling me "picko matre, picko matre". They kept beating me into my legs, head and back. They treated me like animal.*

The respondent was the only one who was beaten by the officers. Later on, eight of the men, including him, were transported from Slovenia to Croatia, and from there to Bosnia. Only one boy, a 16 years old minor, was allowed to stay in Slovenia and claim asylum there. The respondent explained that the Croatian police were acting nice to them during their expulsion back to Bosnia and they had no problems with them.

The interviewee had pain in the back of his head (vertex), his right elbow, and his leg, caused by the physical attack by the Slovenian police officers. He declined to take photographs of his injured arms and bruises to protect his anonymity.

**13/08/2018**

**"THE GROUP TRIED SEVERAL TIMES, TO EXPLAIN TO THE POLICE OFFICERS, THAT THEY WANTED TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM IN SLOVENIA"**

**Date and time:** August 13, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Near the Croatian border, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.18299330963834, 15.805772128197532

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: 16-30 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 10+ Slovenian Police Officers, Croatian Police Officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The Interview concerning this incident was conducted with one group member with the help of a translator from Pashtu to English.

A group of people on the move left Velika Kladuša and walked through Croatia to Slovenia. On the seventh day at around 12am. they were walking in a forest where a local hunter detected them. Some of the boys from the group approached the hunter and politely asked him not to call the police, but he did not listen to them and called the police. Once the police arrived, they said to the boys that the hunter called them and explained that there was a group of men walking with the intention to cross the border to Italy. The minors told the police that this was not true because they wanted to reach Ljubjana and apply for asylum there.

*We did not have money for going to Italy by a car. So, our plan was to go to Slovenia and apply there for the asylum there*

Soon after the first group of police officers arrived, they called another 10 police officers. This second group of police officers asked the boys whether they had some money, but the boys told them that they did not.

The respondent stated that the group tried several times, to explain to the police officers, that they wanted to apply for asylum in Slovenia. One showed the police his WhatsApp conversation with the lawyers from PIC whom he had contacted once he crossed to Slovenia. The WhatsApp conversation contained the location and time when the group crossed the border to Slovenia and proved their intention to seek asylum in the country as it clearly stated "I want asylum in Slovenia". But the police officers did not pay any attention to this and responded only by laughing at them.

The police further told the men to lay down on the ground with their faces down. The men had to stay like this for 25 minutes while the police officers were searching their bodies, searching for money.

Afterwards the police gave them a document and asked them to sign it. But the men did not understand the content of the paper as it was written in Slovenian language and they were not provided a translation in English or Pashtu. The officers made them sign the paper. Afterwards, three minors from the group were transported to the police station, while others were pushed

directly back to Croatia and from there to Bosnia. Two of the minors were enabled to seek asylum in Slovenia and one was pushed back to Bosnia the following day.

The other ten were taken in a small van to the border to Croatia. They stated that the car was closed and dark. According to the respondent, it was very hot inside of the van and the police switched on a heater, so that the men had problems breathing and got sick. The journey to the Croatian border in this closed van took around 3 hours. One of the men was losing consciousness because of the heat. Although the men knocked on the door and asked for help, the police only responded by shouting at them: "What do you want?", and closed the door again.

*We were very hungry but they only gave us old bread with water.*

At the Croatian-Slovenian border, the men had to change vans and were then driven by the Croatian police to the Bosnian border. The Croatian police left them around 23 kilometers away from Velika Kladuša, from where they walked for 6 hours in the night until they reached Velika Kladuša.

**05/08/2018**

**"I SAID TO THE POLICE THAT I WAS A MUSLIM AND REFUSED TO TAKE OFF MY CLOTHES. BUT THEY SAID, 'NO PROBLEM' AND TOOK OFF ALL MY CLOTHES."**

**Date and time:** August 5, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Forest close to Ilirska Bistrica, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.589254, 14.451788

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: 10-47 , from: Afghanistan, Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenian police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 13 people, two families with children and two single men, all from Afghanistan and Iran, walked for ten days from Bihac (Bosnia-Herzegovina) to Slovenia. While crossing a forest close to Ilirska Bistrica (Slovenia), they were caught by the local police. One of the men told the police officers about their wish to apply for asylum in Slovenia, but the police answered:

*Tomorrow deport, you can't stay here. Here is not Afghanistan or Iran.*

Then, the Slovenian police stripped them all naked, including women and children, and searched their bodies.

*I said to the police that I was a Muslim and refused to take off my clothes. But they said, 'No problem' and took off all my clothes. They forced me to take all my clothes off, and kept repeating to me: 'Picko Matre, Picko Matre'. The children were crying too much. After, the police told me and other women maybe five times or six times to take off our scarfs, but I did not want to. My son was scared and told me: 'Mum, please, remove your scarf because otherwise maybe they hit you'. I was crying. And the police removed the scarf from my head and threw it on the ground. It was very difficult for me. The policeman told me: 'This is the last time that you wore your scarf, here is not Afghanistan, here is Slovenia, here is no Islam!'*

After that, all people were transported to a police station by car. One of the girls saw an UNHCR and IOM staff in the police station and thought that they would support them with the asylum procedures. But no one from the UNHCR neither from IOM communicated with them throughout the whole time they were in the police station. The families were only provided an Iranian translator who was questioning them about their names, nationalities, location of entrance to Slovenia and intentions. The whole group spent one day in the Slovenian police station:

*You know, my little sister she was crying because of the police. I did not understand their language. But she understood them because she went to the school in Serbia, which is similar language to Slovenian. She said to us that they [Slovenian police] were using bad words, when they kept shouting at us: 'jebem ti picko matre'. And my little sister was crying because of that.*

The police took pictures of everyone, took their fingerprints, and the translator told them to sign a document that was written in Slovenian so that none of them understood it. When one of the girls asked the translator to explain what they were supposed to sign, he just told them to sign it and stop asking any questions. After that, the families and the men were taken to Croatia by car.

*Police put all men into one car, very bad car. It was closed and there was no oxygen, so the men could not breath. Police was smiling in the car and laughing at the men that they could not breath properly and did not feel well. We were in that car for 5 hours.*

In Croatia, all people were handed over to the Croatian police who directly pushed them back to the Bosnian border near Velika Kladuša and broke their phones by stealing the batteries and memory cards and destroying the charging stations:

*I had all my memories from Iran in my phone, pictures of my mother who died, my sister, but I lost it all now. They took it and now we don't have any memory with our family in Afghanistan.*

The police then told everyone to stand in a row and go back to Bosnia. The officers were kicking adults into their legs if they walked a bit out of that row. Once they crossed the border, the police stopped following them.

31/07/2018

## “HE FOUND A RAZOR AND ATTEMPTED TO COMMIT SUICIDE BY CUTTING HIS LEFT ARM. A POLICE OFFICER FOUND HIM LYING ON THE GROUND BLEEDING, BUT DID NOT PROVIDE ANY HELP”

**Date and time:** July 31, 2018 10:00

**Location:** Dol, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 46.149811, 14.3676

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: unknown , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Croatian Police, Slovenian Police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 8 men from Iran walked from Velika Kladuša crossing Croatia to Slovenia. Once they arrived in Slovenia, walking on a road near Dol, one of the men contacted the number of PIC lawyers to ask for help with the asylum procedure and prevent their deportation back to Bosnia. He shared their GPS location with one of the lawyers from PIC and stated in the message that he wanted to apply for asylum in Slovenia (see screenshots). The lawyer advised the men to go to a local police station to apply for asylum and to show his mobile phone conversation with the PIC as a proof for his expressed intention to apply for asylum in Slovenia. On their way to a police station, they were caught by the local police:

*“We said to the police that we contacted PIC, and they told us: ‘Fuck PIC!’”*

The police transported all the men to the police station in Cernomejl, where the interviewed man repeatedly asked the police for access to the asylum procedures. He received only verbal threats as a response and was forced to sign a document that he did not understand because it was written in English.

*“The Police was rude to us. I told them, I want asylum, I want asylum, but the police denied and did jokes with us when we asked for asylum. They told us sleep on the ground and we beat you if you wake up. Please brother I want asylum, but the police said no, no. After, the police gave us paper and told us to sign it, but we did not want this. But one Nigerian got beaten because he did not want to sign this paper. And when I supposed to sign that paper, I wrote on the paper that I want asyl in Slovenia. And I did not have an option and had to sign that paper”.*

After that, the respondent was locked in a cell at the police station for 6 hours without any water or food. When he realized that he was denied asylum in Slovenia and was going to be deported back to Bosnia, he found a razor and attempted to commit suicide by cutting his left arm. A police officer found him lying on the ground, bleeding, but did not provide any help. After ten minutes, another person came to treat his open wounds. The police's only comment about the whole incident was:

*"Why did you cut your hands? Cut your neck and kill yourself"*

After few hours, all men in the group, except the two minors, were transported back to Croatia by car and from there to the Bosnian border, 20 km away from Velika Kladuša.

*"When they [Croatian police] sent me back, they broke my phone, charger and sim card, they broke phones of all people. Slovenian police wanted to take our money, but we did not have any money".*

On their way back to Velika Kladuša, they were picked up by the Bosnian police who took them to the hospital by car where the man who attempted to commit suicide got medical treatment.

**31/07/2018**

## **"THE MEN WERE FORCED TO SIGN A PAPER CONCERNING THEIR DEPORTATION"**

**Date and time:** July 31, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Close to Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.969241, 14.490043

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 16 person(s), age: 16-30 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 7 Croatian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

16 men from Morocco and Algeria started from Bihac (Bosnia and Herzegovina), crossing Croatia to Slovenia. The men's intention was to continue to Italy where they wanted to apply for asylum. While walking through the Slovenia, a local woman detected them and called the police. Two police men arrived and asked the men about their nationality and their reasons to

enter Slovenia. After that, the police took all of them to a local police station in a small town close to Ljubljana, where the men were provided a translator from Palestine.

One of the men told the translator that he wanted to apply for asylum in Slovenia and asked him to translate his wish to the police. As the man had a basic knowledge of English, he could understand that the translator was not translating his words correctly and did not state to the police his wish to stay in Slovenia. The man experienced the translator only translating correctly when he is payed a fee.

At the police station, the men were forced to sign a paper concerning their deportation before being deported to Croatia and from there to Bosnia in a car with five Croatian policemen:

*“Croatian police was not behaving good, they broke my phone. Seven Croatian police officers took me to Bosnia, 43 km from Bihac, the small village called Vakuf. They [the police] broke my phone in Vakuf, they broke 6 phones in total. But good phones, they kept, like Galaxy 7 or Galaxy 8 they took, but other they destroyed, Galaxy G5 3. And after we walked back to Bihac”*

**29/07/2018**

## **“I SWEAR I THOUGHT HE WANTED TO KILL ME”**

**Date and time:** July 29, 2018 14:00

**Location:** Črnomelj, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.57148369999999, 15.193077300000027

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: unknown , from: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, electric shock, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Police officers from Slovenia and Croatia

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

Six men walked for six days from Velika Kladuša (BiH) through Croatia to Slovenia. The men crossed the border from Croatia to Slovenia through a river, and were walking in a forest, when they were detected by a woman and a man in a car, who called the police. The men continued walking for ten more km. until they were close to the town Črnomelj, where they were caught by the Slovenian police. The group explained in the interview that they hoped, that the police would take them to an asylum centre and help them to access the asylum procedures.

The respondent clearly said to the police that he wanted to apply for asylum in Slovenia. Afterwards all men were transported in a van to a place that the respondent called “a small camp”, where they were provided with a Palestinian translator. The translator was unkind to the men and before beginning the asylum procedures, he told the men that they had no chance to claim asylum in Slovenia due to their nationalities, and kept calling the men liars.

*“We all asked for asylum, but he did not want to accept our application. The translator made a report and he told us: ‘Why you are choosing this country? You do not want to stay in Slovenia, you prefer to go to France, so why are you applying here?’. The translator also told us that if we enter any country, we don’t have the right to apply for asylum. He also told us that we did not have any chance to get protection because we were Algerians and Moroccans. He was very unkind to us”.*

According to the group, only one of the men was accepted for the interview that was part of the asylum procedure. This interview was meant to be valid for all six applications (all six men), instead of making one interview to each of the applicants. One of the questions posed to the man was why they did not apply for asylum as soon as they entered the country in some police station, instead of waiting until they got caught in the forest. *“You wanted to get into Ljubljana to move to another country”*, claimed the police officer who did the interview.

The result of the ‘asylum procedure’ was negative. The men spent one night in this small camp, where they slept in a container on the floor. The following day, all men were forced to sign a paper that was written in Slovenian language, so none of them understood its content. The respondent stated that the police kept telling them to sign the paper, so they did.

Around 7pm the Slovenian police transported the men in a van to the Slovenian-Croatian border, to a place that looked like a scrapyard. There, the men were handed over to the Croatian police, who transported them in another van to the Bosnian border, close to the official border check-point in Velika Kladuša. He told me, that during the deportation back to Bosnia, all of them were physically attacked by the Croatian police:

*“When we arrived at the border, they told us to leave the car in groups of 2. When I went out of the car with other of my mates, there was one policeman with blue suit that start beating us with a baton. I tried to run away. It was dark and we were in a forest. I thought that if I run I would enter Bosnia and then, they could do nothing to me anymore. But after like 3 meters, they were some men with black suits that I could not see properly because it was dark, and they had night vision glasses, so they could see me. I was running with flip flops and I felt down when I tried to escape. He caught me and was beating me. He put this stick with electric shocks in my neck, after I fell down on the floor, and I swear I thought he wanted to kill me”.*

The respondent further explained that he has heart problems, which was the main reason why he left Algeria to get better medical care in Europe. He told the police officer, who was beating him, that he had medical problem with his heart, asking him to stop beating him, but the police ignored this:

*“When I was on the floor and the policeman with black suit gave me electric shocks into my neck, I told him that I had heart problems. But he kept beating me. He stopped beating me when he seemed to be tired of it. I got up and wanted to put my shoes on, but again, he started beating me, even when I was already on the Bosnian land”.*

He further stated, that the Croatian police stole their money and phones, taking 120 euros from one man, 20 euros from the interviewed himself, and 90 and 60 euros from other men. The Croatian police officers also took the men's passports.

**27/07/2018**

## **“THE MEN WERE FORCED TO HAND OVER THEIR SYRIAN PASSPORTS AND ID'S TO THE BORDER POLICE WHO TORE THEM INTO PIECES AND BURNED THEM”**

**Date and time:** July 27, 2018 15:00

**Location:** Close to Johovica, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.0922077, 15.791496199999983

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 17-28 , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Four Croatian border officers with two cars. All wearing black clothes and masks.

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

A group of men walked from Velika Kladuša (Bosnia and Herzegovina) for three days and nights until they reached Slovenia. In Slovenia, in a forest close to the village called Johovica, they were caught by the Slovenian police. The police did not take the men to a police station and did not enable any of them to apply for asylum in Slovenia, although they clearly stated that they were from Syria and wanted asylum in Slovenia. The men were directly pushed back to Croatia, where they were handed over to the Croatian police who drove them to the Bosnian border.

When the men were being driven by Croatian police to the Bosnian border, there was a lack of oxygen in the van and the men had problems breathing inside the back of the van. They asked the police to open a window, but the police responded to them: “Fuck you, no oxygen!”. The van was driving fast and some of the men were feeling sick.

*“When they were deporting us with the car, they were driving really fast and people were vomiting. I asked please help, but nothing. The car was driving about 1,5 hours driving from Johovica to Velika Kladuša”.*

When they reached the Bosnian border, the police told the men to get out of the car, searched their bodies and stole their money. The police took 300 euros from one person and 200 euros from another person, afterwards the police broke their phones. The men were forced to hand over their Syrian passports and IDs to the border police who teared them into pieces and burned them.

*“No problem that they take my mobile and money as I can buy again, but passport I cannot buy again. Maybe I will want to go back to Syria, but I don’t have passport or ID, and I don’t have any proof that I am really from Syria”*

After the police stole and destroyed the men’s possessions, they shouted at the men: “Go back to Bosnia!”, and started physically attacking them with metal batons, kicking them, and punching them, including the minor. One officer pushed one of the men to the ground, stepped on his back, and was kicking him into his shoulders and back. They told the police that one of the guys had a heart problem and asked them to not to beat him, but the police only responded: “Fuck you! Shut up!” and attacked him, hitting into his chest, targeting his heart.

Finally, the border police again shouted at the men to go back to Bosnia and started shooting multiple rounds of gunshots near them and under their legs. The men started running across the border and when they did not hear the sound of guns anymore, they walked back to Velika Kladuša.

One person sought medical treatment in the hospital in Velika Kladuša, but was refused by a doctor: “Sorry, but we cannot do anything for you.” The following day, they were treated by the MSF team. After the examination of the patient, the MSF medical staff found a left fractured clavicle, which is the part of the shoulder that connects arm with ribcage, caused by the beating (see photo of medical report). Other men had bruised arms, face, and back, and one had a swollen injury on his left hand caused by the attack with a metal baton.

**26/07/2018**

**“ONE OFFICER TOLD HIM TO KNEEL DOWN AND PUT HIS HEAD ON THE GROUND, ANOTHER POLICE OFFICER SAT ON HIS HEAD AND WAS PUSHING HIS HEAD TO THE GROUND WITH HIS ENTIRE BODYWEIGHT, FOR ABOUT 8 MINUTES”**

**Date and time:** July 26, 2018 00:00

**Location:** 2km from the Croatian border, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.1838373, 15.806545400000005

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 47 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** pushing people to the ground, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenian police, 2 Croatian police officers, 1 dog

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent walked from Velika Kladusa to Croatia, and from there to Slovenia. After reaching Slovenia, about half an hour after he crossed the Croatian-Slovenian border, the police caught him and pushed him back to Croatia, where he was handed over to police officers. The Croatian police transported the respondent back to Bosnia. But the car suddenly stopped after two minutes of driving, still close to the Slovenian border, and the police told the respondent to get out of the car. Then, the officers started physically attacking him. One officer told him to kneel down and put his head on the ground, another police officer sat on his head and was pushing his head to the ground with his entire bodyweight, for about 8 minutes.

*"When the police was beating me, I was very scared, I thought that the DAESH [ISIS] was trying to kill me here in Europe. I came to Europe to be safe and to get help and I found this"*

Following this violent incident, the police told the respondent to get back to the car and transported him to the Bosnian border, close to Bihac, and pushed him back to Bosnia. Once he arrived close to the Bosnian border, the police stole his shoes and told him to walk back to Bosnia. At first he was walking barefoot, but after a while he found a pair of sandals on the way towards the city of Bihac. According to the interviewee this is a common place of deportation, so it is full of belongings from those being deported there.

The interviewee had two big marks/injuries on his forehead caused by the physical attack of the police officer sitting on his head. He refused to seek medical aid after the incident.

**17/07/2018**

**"HE ONCE AGAIN TRIED TO ASK THE CROATIAN POLICE FOR ASYLUM, BUT INSTEAD OF A RESPONSE, HE WAS PHYSICALLY ATTACKED WITH METAL BATONS"**

**Date and time:** July 17, 2018 12:00

**Location:** Sava, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.86401714355317, 15.684128360306318

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 16-42 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Slovenian Police, Croatian police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 7 men, including one minor, walked from Velika Kladusa through Croatia until they reached the river Sava on the Croatian-Slovenian border, which they crossed. After a few minutes of walking in Slovenian land, they were detected by two Slovenian police officers. When the police caught the men, they called 20 additional police officers, who arrived with a big van and transported the group to a nearby police station.

In the police station, the police officers took the men's finger prints for identification and detained them for one day. The interviewee and another person from the group kept asking the police for asylum in Slovenia, and the police responded only, "Ok". But after one day of detention in the police station, all the men were deported to Croatia, without any access to asylum procedure and explanation of why they were denied access.

In Croatia, they were handed over to a team of Croatian police officers, who transported them to the Bosnian border, close to the official check-point, for their deportation. The respondent further reported that when they reached the Bosnian border point, the police searched through the men's pockets and stole all of their money and phones. The interviewee once again tried to ask the Croatian police for asylum, but instead of a response, he was physically attacked with metal batons:

*"Croatian police beat me here [pointing under his left eye], you see. And here, also [pointing at his bandaged hand and arms]. I asked for asylum, you know. I just asked for asylum, but they did not accept it, they just attacked me and after said: "Shut your mouth and go back." And directly go back to Bosnia. And after, I was feeling more pressure, and asked for some water the police, because the blood was coming under my eye. But they told me no water, they refused my request".*

When the other men saw how the police attacked him, they were scared and did not talk throughout the whole deportation process. The respondent told me that this was his third attempt to try and cross the border from Bosnia to Europe and exercise his right to claim asylum in Europe, and explained me his frustration from his denial.

*"I have worked for military in Afghanistan, Kandahar, very dangerous place, for 6 years. Taliban was sending me letters, saying they kill me if I continue to cooperate with my American friends. Many people died from my village. I can't go back. I have all documents in my hands and can give them in other country in any immigration department. But the way is closed now, and we don't know where we go"*

11/07/2018

## “ONE GUY WAS TRYING TO ESCAPE WHILE BEING BEATEN, BUT HE SLIPPED DOWN AND VERY BADLY INJURED HIS BACK SO THAT HE COULD NOT WALK ANYMORE”

**Date and time:** July 11, 2018 12:00

**Location:** Croatian-Slovenian border, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.4943971144946, 15.285362956314543

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent reports that he left Velika Kladusa with his three friends and was walking for six days until they reached Slovenia. None of them had a battery in their phone anymore and decided to ask the local people to charge their phones in their house. A local woman suggested to the men to call the Slovenian police

who could help them to claim asylum in Slovenia, and the men agreed. Slovenian police brought the men into a police station and questioned them about how they reached Slovenia, their nationality, and took their finger prints to identify them as none of them had a passport (2018-07-11 12:00:00).

The men asked the police if they could apply for asylum in Slovenia, but the police said to them that the asylum procedure was closed for them, without explaining any reasons. After that, the men were detained in a police station for one night. Around 3 pm the next day, a police officer came and told the men that they were going to be transported to a Slovenian refugee camp. However, the men were taken to a prison instead of a camp, where they stayed for the following two days.

While the respondent was detained in the prison, the police accused him of being a smuggler, based on information from his friends, which the respondent denied. Two days later he and other 7 men, whom he did not know, were being deported by car back to Bosnia. When they arrived close to the Bosnian border, the police man who was transporting them struggled to find the way to Bosnia, so he asked for directions in a local police office (unknown place), where they offered him to take over the deportation of the men. Once the men reached the Bosnian border, two police officers took their phones and broke them, and searched through

their pockets for money. The police officers stole in total 600 euros from the men, and afterwards they physically attacked all of them.

*"They [police officers] took four people out of the car and beat them with metal batons. When they stopped beating them, they took other four from a car for the second round, and I was in that group. One guy was trying to escape while being beaten, but he slipped down and very badly injured his back that he could not walk anymore. I went out of the car and they were holding my hood and beating me with a baton into my back, leg, and my face. They [police] did not want to let me go and continue beating me."*

The respondent and the other men managed to escape and were running into Bosnian territory, trying to carry the man who injured his back. The Croatian police were chasing them and searching for them in the Bosnian land, but they gave up when they could not see the men any more. Then the respondent called the Bosnian police who arrived and were very kind to the men, transported them back to Velika Kladusa, and took them to the hospital for a medical treatment.

08/07/2018

## **"HE CLEARLY EXPRESSED HIS INTENTION TO CLAIM ASYLUM IN SLOVENIA MULTIPLE TIMES, BUT THE POLICE REFUSED TO OPEN AN ASYLUM PROCEDURE"**

**Date and time:** July 8, 2018 12:00

**Location:** Slovenian village close to the Croatian border, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.88569452892013, 15.537986173391573

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: unknown , from: Nigeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 3 slovenian police officers and 1 dog

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

According to the respondent, he and 9 other men walked from Velika Kladusa through Croatia, and from there crossed a river to Slovenia. When they reached Slovenian territory, they decided to split up and continue walking separately. The interviewee walked to a nearby town, from where he wanted to take a bus further on. But a local girl, around 16 years old, saw him and

called the police (2018-07-08 12:00:00). Three police officers arrived in a car with a dog and brought him to a local police station.

When the police caught the respondent, he was trying to explain to them his situation, telling them that in his city in Nigeria there is too much killing and a bad life situation. He clearly expressed his intention to claim asylum in Slovenia multiple times, but the police refused to open an asylum procedure and responded that he was "over dramatic". When they reached a police station, the respondent asked for legal aid, but the police refused to call a lawyer and shouted at him to stop speaking. The Police acted aggressively towards him and a police officer told him that if he continued asking for asylum, she would crashed something on his head.

He was forced to sign a document that he did not understand because it was written in the Slovenian language and he was not provided a translator. He was then placed in a detention cell with 9 other men, where there was a lack of oxygen so he had problems to breathe there. After one day, he was deported to Croatia, and from there to Bosnia.

**04/07/2018**

**"IT WAS VERY SMALL VAN AND NO AIR. HE WAS DRIVING VERY DANGEROUSLY, AND PEOPLE WERE VOMITING."**

**Date and time:** July 4, 2018 04:00

**Location:** Slovenian village, close to the Croatian border

**Coordinates:** 45.86883743579279, 15.629679864480295

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Croatia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 16-24 years old , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A transit group of ten started their journey from Velika Kladusa (BiH) in late June 2018. They crossed Croatia and managed to cross the Slovenian border without being detected. On their eighth day of walking, however, they were apprehended by the authorities in a Slovenian village. It was July 4th around 4 a.m. After they had been taken to a police station, they said that they want to apply for asylum in Slovenia. However, the policemen refused to start an asylum procedure, saying that Slovenia was full of migrants and they could allegedly not apply for asylum there.

*"I asked Croatian police, you [let] stay so many people, why you don't let stay me here? [I was] almost 10 days walking here. You let stay somebody, but not me, what is this? Always police catch me and send back. This is not fair."*

In the police station, the officers asked the group members about their age, nationality, and how they reached Slovenia. One group member told the police that he was 16 years old, but reportedly saw that a police officer instead simply wrote down that he was 18 years old, thus wrongly registering him as being of full age.

The respondent was having stomachache throughout the whole time of their detention because he had not eaten and drunk properly for 8 days. When he asked the police to provide him medical help, the police ignored his request and instead locked him into a cell without any food and water for 24 hours.

On July 5th, the group was taken into a police van. According to the respondent, the driver of the van was driving very fast and aggressively for about three hours and everyone was falling from one side to another:

*"It was very small van and no air. He was driving very dangerously, and people were vomiting. I asked, please, stop the car, stop the van. But nobody listened".*

After three hours of driving, the van reached the Slovenian-Croatian border. The Slovenian authorities handed the group over to the Croatian authorities who directly transported them further to the Croatian-Bosnian border.

At the Croatian-Bosnian border, the group members were told to get off the van. The respondent reported that the Croatian police officers then took 170 Euros from them and broke their phones. When the respondent politely asked the police to give them back their money, the police only said: "Go back!"

The following picture shows some of the group's broken phones:

The group thus crossed the border back into Bosnia and Herzegovina and started walking towards Velika Kladusa. After a while, they were stopped by the Bosnian police who helped them by transporting them back to Velika Kladusa and to reach the medical help in the local hospital.

The respondent stated that this was already the fifth time that he had been pushed back to Bosnia:

*"If you go to Croatia and you get caught, they directly deport you. They don't give you water, no food. If you die, no problem police. ... But I need to go go go again. No problem, I try again".*

03/07/2018

## “THE MEN HAD TO SIGN A DOCUMENT THAT NONE OF THEM UNDERSTOOD BECAUSE IT WAS WRITTEN IN THE SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE ”

**Date and time:** July 3, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Stara Lipa, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.466441, 15.193674

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 23-26 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Slovenian police officers, Croatian police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On July 3rd. 2018 early in the morning, a group of 5 men between 23 and 26 years old, from Afghanistan, started walking from Velika Kladusa in order to cross the Croatian-Slovenian border. After five days of walking, they reached Stara Lipa in Slovenia. Around 12 p.m., they stopped to sleep for two hours and were woken up by the Slovenian police. They took them to a police station in Stara Lipa where they were forced to give their age and nationality, and pictures were taken. The men had to sign a document that none of them understood because it was written in the Slovenian language and they were not provided a translator.

After that, the men were transported to another police station one hour away from the one in Stara Lipa, where they were forced to wear grey prison uniforms and detained for one night. In the morning, one of the men expressed his intention to ask for asylum. One of the police men answered:

*“No chance to take asylum here, in Slovenia are 600 migrants and here is no space for more.”*

The men were transported to the Croatian police who pushed them back to the Bosnian border where they were left to walk back.

14/06/2018

## “THE POLICE REFUSED THEM ACCESS TO THE ASYLUM PROCEDURES AND VERBALLY ATTACKED THEM”

**Date and time:** June 14, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Rakovec, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.922627, 15.70264510000004

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 23, 25, 30 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenian border police officers (wearing uniforms), 1 police car (van)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The interviewee and his two friends walked from Velika Kladusa (Bosnia) through Croatia, and from there to Slovenia. Within Slovenian territory, on a road close to the village Rakovec, the group was detected by the Slovenian border police. The police took the men to a police station, where they were interviewed. The interviewee and his friends expressed their intention to seek asylum in Slovenia, but the police refused them access to the asylum procedures and verbally attacked them.

*“Police said to us that we could not apply for asylum in Slovenia and told us to go back to Bosnia and apply for asylum there. They [police officers] were telling us: Go back you migrant!”*

Afterwards, a police officer took the men’s fingerprints, photographed their faces, and made them sign a document in Slovenian language that the men did not understand, as they could not speak Slovenian and the police did not provide them with a translator. The men have not obtained a copy of this document. Police stole their three phones and three power banks. They were hiding their money in a tooth paste, so that the police couldn’t find it. In the end, the police drove the men to the Croatian border from where they walked around 30 km back to Velika Kladusa.

14/06/2018

**“HE WAS CAUGHT BY 6 SLOVENIAN POLICE OFFICERS WHO ELECTROCUTED HIM WITH AN ELECTROSHOCK WEAPON, TOOK HIM TO THE CROATIAN BORDER, AND THREW HIM INTO A RIVER”**

**Date and time:** June 14, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Close to the Croatian-Slovenian border, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.865508740041356, 15.621676491034236

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 23 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** electric shock, water immersion

**Police involved:** 6 Slovenian border police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The interviewee walked alone from Velika Kladusa across the Croatian border, and from there to Slovenia. While he was in a forest in Slovenia, he was caught by 6 Slovenian police officers who electrocuted him with an electroshock weapon, took him to the Croatian border, and threw him into a river. The police officers did not asked him any questions about his nationality or whether he had intentions to apply for asylum in Slovenia. The police further stole his mobile phone and money. He was treated in a hospital in Croatia, was unable to walk and needed a wheelchair because of open cuts in his leg, as a result of the assault by the police.

13/06/2018

**“THE POLICE OFFICER STARTED VERBALLY ATTACKING HIM, HITTING HIM IN THE HEAD AND SLAPPED HIS FACE SEVERAL TIMES”**

**Date and time:** June 13, 2018 13:30

**Location:** Žeželj, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.9523505, 14.571617199999991

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 16, 17, 30, 39 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** 11 Slovenian border police officers, 2 cars (one van and one smaller car), 2 police dogs

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The interviewee and his friends left Velika Kladusa (Bosnia), crossed Croatia, and were walking within Slovenia, when they were detected by the Slovenian border police. Border police officers asked them to identify themselves with their names, nationality, documents and afterwards the minors were questioned about their parents (e.g. whether their parents died or whether they travel with a mother or father).

One police officer noticed that the interviewee was using a GPS and based on this, he accused him of being a smuggler. The police officer started verbally attacking him, hitting him in the head and slapped his face several times. No one else got physically attacked. Afterwards, he and all his friends were taken by van to a police station in Pavlovasa. The whole group spent in total 7 hours in the police station where they had to write down their names, age, names of their parents and other identifying information. The interviewee expressed his intention to seek asylum in Slovenia, but he was denied access to asylum procedures.

*"I said that I wanted to stay here in Slovenia that I did not want to go to Italia or anywhere else. I said I wanted to work here. But he said "no, no working, no immigration, you go back". He did not give me any chance to apply for asylum"*

The police forced the men to sign a document, which they did not understand because it was written in the Slovenian language and the men were not provided with a translator. According to a Slovenian translator, who later assisted with translation of this document, the document falsely states that they were provided a translator. The document also states that he left Afghanistan because of poverty, and does not mention the Taliban persecution that he told the officers were his reason for leaving Afghanistan. It further states that he had a legal guardian, his cousin, which is also a wrong information that enabled the police officers to not to treat him as an unaccompanied minor. In the end, police drove the whole group to the Croatian-Bosnian border, from where they walked back to Velika Kladusa and reached Kladusa around 11:15 pm.

01/06/2018

## “POLICE OFFICERS TOOK THEIR MEMORY CARD, DESTROYED SERBIAN CAMP CARDS AND MEDICAL PAPER”

**Date and time:** June 1, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Slovenian-Croatian border, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.87729142612112, 15.669200167793747

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Two Pakistani men were caught at the Slovenian-Croatian border, while they were hiding in a truck. Police officers took them to a police station and placed them in jail for 24 hours. While they were in jail, police checked their phones and deleted phone numbers and pictures, afterwards the phones were given back. The police officers took their memory card, destroyed Serbian camp cards and medical papers (one of them has a health problem). Police took pictures of them and asked for personal information (family name and nationality). They asked for asylum but it was denied, instead they were pushed back to the Serbian-Croatian border by two police officers.

14/04/2018

## “THE BORDER POLICE TOLD THEM TO STAND UP ONE BY ONE, AND PROCEEDED TO BEAT THEM ALL”

**Date and time:** April 14, 2018 02:00

**Location:** border crossing near Obrezje, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.84525, 15.694777799999997

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** Slovenian police found them and pushed them back to Croatia, where Croatian police deported them to the Serbo-Croatian border. There Croatian border police treated them violently.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 8 people from Afghanistan crossed from Serbia to Croatia, and proceeded to the Slovenian border. At the border crossing the Slovenian police found them in the trucks and arrested them.

They asked for asylum in Slovenia but the police responded that this was not possible. One police officer told them that if they had walked they could have been eligible to seek asylum. Furthermore the police told them that they didn't want them to enter into Europe. The group were hungry since they hadn't eaten for two days, and the police gave them food and water.

Afterwards the Slovenian police transferred them directly to the Croatian border police. The Croatian police took them to an unknown police station. They stayed there for 3 to 4 hours. They asked again for asylum in Croatia, but the police officer told them it was not impossible as the Croatian government 'closed the stay'. The police took their personal information but didn't give them any papers.

The police drove them to the Serbian border, near Tovarnik – Sid. The police that drove them to the border left around 1pm. and left them with the Croatian border police. The border police told them to stand up one by one, and proceeded to beat them all. As the interviewee tried to talk with the police, asking them why they were beating them, one police officer stood on his feet and beat him hard with a stick. The police told them that they had to go back to Serbia and never again try to come back to Croatia. The police pushed them back to Serbia.

*Audio available S140418*

**26/01/2018**

## “ONCE AGAIN THEY ASKED FOR ASYLUM, BUT THE POLICE REJECTED IT SAYING THAT CROATIA ONLY ACCEPTS FAMILIES”

**Date and time:** January 26, 2018 11:00

**Location:** Near Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.9038288, 15.655325400000038

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Croatia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: unknown , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Slovenian border police, Slovenian police at the police station

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A person was hiding in a train, at a border control crossing at the Croatian-Slovenian border, Slovenian police caught them. The person was taken to a police station, where the police took a picture of them and took their personal data. The person asked for asylum but the police rejected it, saying that the person cannot seek asylum at a border crossing. Afterwards the person was pushed back to Croatia. At the border police station the police took pictures of the person and took their personal data. Once again they asked for asylum, but the police rejected it saying that Croatia only accepts families.

**20/01/2018**

## “WHEN THEY ASKED FOR ASYLUM THE POLICE MADE FUN OF THEM”

**Date and time:** January 20, 2018 11:00

**Location:** Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.898804999999999, 15.654553899999996

**Pushback from:** Slovenia, Croatia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: unknown , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Slovenian and Croatian police

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

12 people were in a train from Sid. At the Slovenian border in Dobova, they were caught by 9 police officers with dogs. When they asked for asylum the police made fun of them answering “No Brasil. Go, go”. The police took them into a van where they had to wait for an hour. Afterwards, they crossed into Croatia and were transferred to another car. They were deported at the Slovenian border to this spot: 45.183706, 19.171923.

15/11/2017

## “AT THE BORDER THE POLICE TOOK THEIR MONEY, BROKE THEIR MOBILE PHONES AND TOOK THEIR SHOES”

**Date and time:** November 15, 2017 05:00

**Location:** Croatian Slovenian border, Croatia

**Coordinates:** 45.838934474180455, 15.642716019140607

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: unknown , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Slovenian border police

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

3 people on the move was caught by police officers described as Slovenian and transferred to Zagreb. They asked for asylum, but the police did not take them to a police station, instead they took them to the Serbian border. At the border, near Tovarnik, the police took their money, broke their mobile phones and took their shoes. There were 6 police officers who they kicked them in the knees and on the arms before pushing them back.

13/10/2017

## “HE ANSWERED THAT THE CAMP IS FULL AND THAT THE ASYLUM PROCEDURES WOULD NOT BE CONTINUED”

**Date and time:** October 13, 2017 04:00

**Location:** Samobor, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.864582, 15.591242

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 20, 21, 27 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Deportation from Slovenia: 5 Slovenian border male police in uniforms/  
Detention in Croatia: 5 Croatian border male police in uniforms/ Deportation to Serbia: 2  
Croatian male police in uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

3 men from Afghanistan travelled from Sid Serbia, across Croatia to Slovenia by walking and driving. They were caught by what they stated were 5 Slovenian border police officers around a kilometer from the Croatian-Slovenian border on October 13th at about 4 am. The police asked for their personal information and searched them, checked their phones and broke the screens on two of their mobile phones. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, but didn't get a proper response from the police.

The alleged Slovenian police called for what were described as 5 Croatian police officers to transport them, in a closed police car to the Croatian side of the border, where the Croatian police put them in detention in the border-patrol building near Samobor Croatia. The men once again expressed their intention to seek asylum. According to the respondent, at about 8am. the police placed a call to Zagreb to the director of a camp, and asked for advice, but he answered that the camp is full and that the asylum procedures would not be continued.

The police asked for their identity details, but the men didn't receive any documents of their detention and asylum procedure. The men spent a few hours in detention, after which two supposed Croatian police officers transported them in a big closed police car to the Croatian-Serbian border near Tovarnik train rails, arriving on October 14th at about 1am. Once more the men expressed their intention to seek asylum. They were searched and asked for their identity details once again. These same police officers pushed them back to the Serbian side. Afterwards the men walked back to Sid Serbia.

**08/10/2017**

**“THEY ASKED FOR ASYLUM, BUT THE SLOVENIAN POLICE PUSHED THEM BACK TO CROATIA AND THE CROATIAN POLICE PUSHED THEM BACK TO SERBIA”**

**Date and time:** October 8, 2017 02:00

**Location:** Velika dolina, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.153151648372, 19.178009033203

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 20, 22 , from: Palestine, Libya

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenian police, 5 Croatian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Two men from Libya and Palestine reported being pushed-back to Serbia on October 8th, 2017. They stated that they had reached Slovenia when the police spotted them through lights from a helicopter. They reported asking for asylum, but Slovenian officials pushed them back to Croatia, and the Croatian police pushed them back to Serbia.

They report that the Slovenian police took their phones and they were taken by 2 police cars, with 5 police officers inside. At 3 in the morning they were dropped at the Croatian-Serbian border and were ordered to go back to Serbia.

19/09/2017

## “THE BORDER POLICE BEAT HIM ONCE AGAIN”

**Date and time:** September 19, 2017 06:00

**Location:** Near Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.150599279414, 19.169769287109

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 26, from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** Slovenian police, Croatian border police (involved in the physical violence)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

This report concerns an event on the September 19th, at 6am in which a 26 year old man from Afghanistan reports being pushed-back to Serbia from the Slovenian border area.

He reached the Slovenian border area by train, and the Slovenian police caught him while he was crossing the border by walking. The officers from the Slovenian border police did not beat him, but called for some colleagues. He then reports being placed in a police van, and brought back to the Croatian side.

The Slovenian police handed him to the Croatian police and he states that he was then beaten by the Croatian police officers. He was then brought to Zagreb in a van, by the Croatian border

police. From Zagreb, the police brought him back to the Serbian border, where the border police beat him once again, especially kicking his right leg.

**03/09/2017**

## **“THEY BEAT HIM AND THE DOGS ATTACKED HIM AND BIT HIM IN THE LEG”**

**Date and time:** September 3, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.154160625239, 19.17257179903

**Pushback from:** Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 16, from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), dog attacks

**Police involved:** Slovenian police

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On September 3rd, 2017, a 16 year old person from Afghanistan reported being pushed back from the Slovenian border to Serbia. The respondent stated that the border police caught him in a container, near Dobova and ordered him to sit down, before they beat him and their dogs attacked him and bit him in the leg. The police then brought him back to Serbia in a van, and let him alone telling him, “*You go Serbia*”.

**29/08/2017**

## **“THE POLICE KICKED AND PUNCHED THEM WITH HANDS AND STICKS; ONE PERSON FELL AND WAS KICKED IN THE FACE BY THE POLICE OFFICERS”**

**Date and time:** August 29, 2017 12:00

**Location:** Slovenian-Croatian border, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.156484841594086, 19.09876083554684

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 14 person(s), age: unknown , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Slovenian police, 8 Croatian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 28th, 2017, a group of 14 Algerians and Moroccans, including at least one minor, were taken into custody by Slovenian police officers. They were kept in cells for 16 hours without receiving any food or water. They were then handed over to the Croatian police.

The interviewee asked for asylum in Croatia, after the police had taken fingerprints, photos and filled out documents. When he said that he was only 16 years old, the police accused him of lying. They were rejected without any explanation.

The police took their phones and bags. The people-on-the-move were then brought to the Serbian border in a police van with 8 Croatian police officers. They opened the back doors and told them to run. While they got out of the van, police officers stood on both sides. The police kicked and punched them with hands and batons. One person fell and was kicked in the face by the police officers.

**28/08/2017**

## “THEY KICKED AND PUNCHED THEM, USING HANDS AND STICKS; THEY ALSO BEAT THE MINORS”

**Date and time:** August 28, 2017 05:00

**Location:** Near Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.158815869104, 19.182815551758

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: unknown , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** Slovenian police, Croatian border police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 29th, 2017, a group of 6 Algerians, 3 of them minors, were captured by the Slovenian police on a train from Zagreb to Ljubljana, at the Croatian-Slovenian border.

They were kept in detention for eight hours without food or water. Then they were handed over to Croatian police, who brought them to the Serbian-Croatian border.

At the border, police officers took them out of the van one by one and sent them across the border. They kicked and punched them, using hands and batons. They also beat the minors. The interviewee had injuries at the chin and shoulder. Others also had their heads injured.

**27/08/2017**

**“THEY WERE TOLD THAT THEY WERE GOING TO ZAGREB TO ASK FOR ASYLUM, BUT THE POLICE BROUGHT THEM BACK TO THE SERBIAN BORDER”**

**Date and time:** August 27, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.8970349, 15.660114300000032

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 22, 23, 25 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Equipped with truncheons

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 27th, 2017, three people from Algeria (25, 23 and 22 years-old) were caught in Dobova, by the Croatian police. They called the UNHCR to ask for help and sent their geo-location. The interviewees told reporters that they believed when UNHCR called the police officers, the police denied that they had caught them. The interviewees describes the police as 'a little bit violent', one of them was hit in the face. After 5 hours in a closed room at the police station, they were told that they were going to Zagreb to ask for asylum. But the police brought them back to the Serbian border, along with around 30 people (Afghans, Pakistanis and Algerians) who were all brought back at the same time. The police beat them when they

came out of the van. The police officers had truncheons. Their phones were broken, and their money torn up. For one of the interviewees it was the 2nd. time he was pushed-back, another the 10th time.

**26/08/2017**

## **“HE ASKED FOR ASYLUM, BUT THEY BROUGHT HIM TO THE CROATIAN POLICE”**

**Date and time:** August 26, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Near Ilirska Bistrica, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.148586928463, 19.166547417811

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 24 , from: Libya

**Minors involved?** Unknown

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

**Police involved:** Slovenian police, Croatian police with dogs

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On August 26th, 2017, a 24 year old person from Libya was apprehended in Slovenia, near Ilirska Bistrica. He was found in a truck, as the police was checking it with flashlights.

The Slovene police took his phone. He asked for asylum, but they brought him to the Croatian police. The Croatian police brought him back to Serbia, in a van along with other people on the move. When they arrived at the Serbian border close to the railway, they were ordered to exit the van one by one, and they started walking in direction of Šid.

In order to frighten them a police officer sent a dog behind them. The interviewee kicked the dog that was trying to bite him in the ankle. The 3 Croatian police officers beat him, causing his nose to bleed. This was the 5th time our interviewee was pushed-back.

**23/08/2017**

## **“A POLICE OFFICER POINTED A GUN AT THEM, ASKING THEM TO GET OUT”**

**Date and time:** August 23, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Dobova, Slovenia

**Coordinates:** 45.155452038956, 19.175052654492

**Pushback from:** Croatia, Slovenia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 20 , from: Morocco, Libya

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Slovenian and Croatian police worked together

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken

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

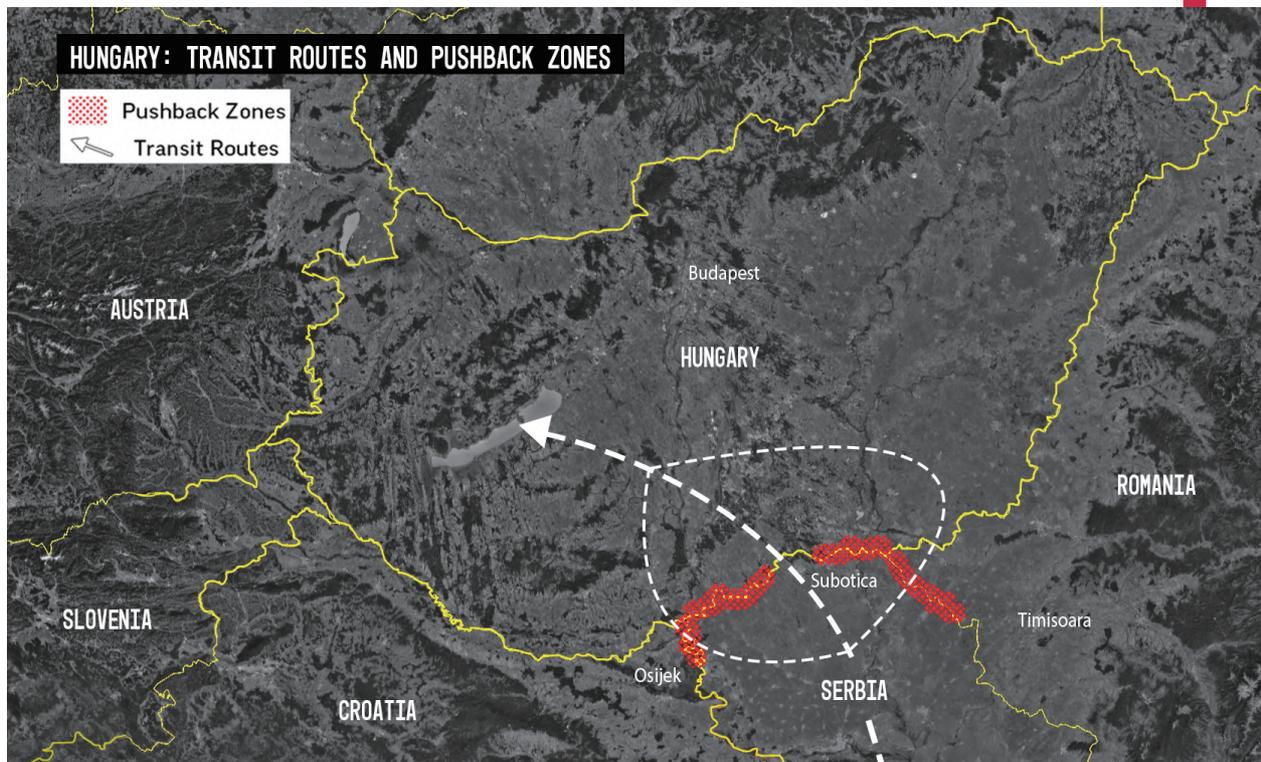
**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 23rd, 2017, in Dobova, Slovenia, the Slovene police found two people in a truck. A police officer pointed a gun at them, asking them to get out. The police broke one of their phones and took the other one. But they didn't have any SIM cards inside. Their money was taken from them as well.

When they asked for the asylum, the police answered no. The Slovenian police brought them to the Croatian police, in the border area, where the officers asked them to fill out a paper with name and age. The Croatian police brought them directly back to Šid, in a van with 5 people.

# HUNGARY



Since September 2015, Hungary has sought to create legal, physical and practical barriers for those wishing to seek asylum. A cornerstone of this policy is the domestic legalisation of collective expulsions. In July 2016, acts were implemented which prescribed that TCNs found within 8km of Hungary's borders with Serbia and Croatia were to be "automatically removed." [1] Accordingly, these people were stripped of the right to seek asylum. This so-called "8 km rule" was extended to the entire territory of Hungary on 28th March 2017.

Additional acts that came into force during this period stipulated that, when the government declares a so-called "state of crisis due to mass migration," all TCNs without a right to stay, found anywhere in Hungary, must be removed to the Serbian side of the border fence [2].

While Hungarian law euphemistically calls these measures "escorts", they are in fact pushbacks, since affected people do not go through any formal administrative procedure, nor are they permitted to apply for asylum. This serves to deprive migrants of any legal remedy and clear proof of having previously been in the country.

BVMN has collected 70 pushback testimonies from Hungary detailing the treatment of 1,120 persons. In these cases, the readmission agreement is not triggered. In fact, Serbian authorities are not even informed by their Hungarian counterparts of these removals. People are not returned at official border crossings; according to respondents, there are gates built into the fence at random points for this purpose, usually in remote and isolated places, and mostly occurring in the dark of night.

BVMN's external partner Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) is documenting and litigating these pushbacks, including those of an extremely violent nature. As a third party, the HHC also intervenes at the ECtHR in push-back cases as well[3]. Since July 2016, the HHC has filed numerous complaints representing victims of violent pushbacks. None of these investigations ended with the military prosecutor pressing charges. Some of their clients have never been to Serbia previously: e.g. an unaccompanied minor chain-refouled from Austria through Hungary to Serbia[4], or a single mother who arrived with children at Budapest airport from a war zone only to be driven down to Serbia following their request to seek asylum.



Due to mounting evidence,[5] the European Commission launched an infringement procedure against Hungary because of these measures[6]. Wider developments are also cause for concern. On 1st July 2018, border monitoring activities became a criminal offense in Hungary, punishable by up to one year in prison[7]. With independent oversight by civil society actors under siege, there is considerable scope for fundamental rights violations to continue unfettered and unacknowledged. Indeed, the Open Society Justice Initiative labelled the bill an 'attack on democratic values, including respect for the rule of law and human rights.'[8]

Written by Andras Lederer (HHC)

Photo: Head injury, Hungarian/Serbian border BVMN:  
<https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/may-25-2019-0000-tompa-border-crossing-hungary>

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- 1 Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (2016).** Hungary: Latest amendments legalise extrajudicial push-back of asylum-seekers, in violation of EU and international law. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-info-update-push-backs-5-July-2016.pdf> [Accessed 02/12/2020];  
 --. (2016). Hungary: Access denied. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-info-update-push-backs-brutality-14-July-2016.pdf> [Accessed 02/12/2020].
  - 2 Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (2017).** Hungary: Government's new asylum bill on collective push-backs and automatic detention. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Info-Update-New-Asylum-Bill-15.02.2017.pdf> [Accessed 02/12/2020];  
 --. (2017). Law on automatic detention and push-backs enter into force despite breaching human rights and EU law. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Info-Update-rule39.pdf> [Accessed 02/12/2020].
  - 3 Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (2017).** Hungary: Government's new asylum bill on collective push-backs and automatic detention. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Info-Update-New-Asylum-Bill-15.02.2017.pdf> [Accessed 02/12/2020];  
 --. (2017). Law on automatic detention and push-backs enter into force despite breaching human rights and EU law. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Info-Update-rule39.pdf> [Accessed 02/12/2020].
  - 4 Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (2020).** World Refugee Day: 1 out of 40,000: Karox. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/en/world-refugee-day-1-out-of-40000-karox/> [Accessed 03/12/2020].
  - 5 European Committee on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. (2017).** Report to the Hungarian Government on the visit to Hungary carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; [CPT/Inf (2018) 42]. Available: <https://rm.coe.int/16808d6f12> [Accessed 04/12/2020]
  - 6 European Commission. (2018).** European Commission v. Hungary, C-808/18. Available: <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=213678&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=14944368> [Accessed 04/12/2020]
  - 7 Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (2018).** Hungarian Government Marks World Refugee Day by Passing Law to Jail Helpers. Available: <https://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungarian-government-marks-world-refugee-day-by-passing-law-to-jail-helpers/> [Accessed 04/12/2020].
  - 8 Open Society Justice Initiative. June, 2018.** Legal Analysis of Hungary's anti-NGO Bill. Available: <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/publications/legal-analysis-hungary-s-anti-ngo-bill>

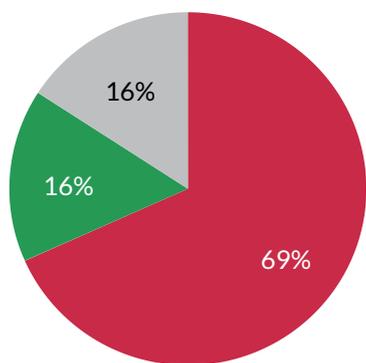
# STATISTICS

## Testimonies of pushbacks in Hungary

Year	Number of testimonies	Affected persons
<b>Overall</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1,114</b>
2017	28	669
2018	13	164
2019	18	192
2020	9	89

### Pushbacks involving minors in Hungary

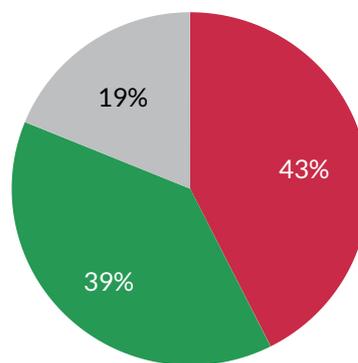
Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old



■ Yes (68.32%) 
 ■ No (15.84%) 
 ■ Unknown (15.84%)

### Intention to ask for asylum in Hungary

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection.



■ Yes (42.57%) 
 ■ No (38.61%) 
 ■ Unknown (18.81%)

17/11/2020

## “DON'T SAY YOU'RE 17!”

**Date and time:** November 17, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Horgos, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 46.177052034962, 19.971256256104

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: group included 2 minors (17 years old) , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** Mixed group of 10 Hungarian policemen in blue uniforms and army officials in camouflagage uniform, 6 dogs and 4 cars.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The interviewee reported that he crossed the border with Hungary through a forest next to Horgos, Serbia, with a group of seven other people from Afghanistan – two of whom were 17 years old. The group entered Hungary at approximately 23:00 on 16th November 2020. Four hours later, at about 03:00 a.m. on the following day (17th Nov.) they were apprehended by a group of 10 soldiers in camouflagage uniforms, accompanied by police in blue uniforms. The officers had 6 dogs with them – all of them wearing muzzles. The members of the group were reportedly kicked and beaten by the authorities upon capture.

Afterwards the transit group were loaded into a police vehicle and driven to the border crossing at Roske/Horgos, where they were made to walk back to Serbia, escorted by the Hungarian officers. On the Serbian side of the crossing there were several policemen waiting for the group. There was some interaction between respective officers and the respondent understood this process to be an organised “handover”- suggesting that the Hungarian officials were meeting their Serbian counterparts with the words “here you go”:

Upon being returned back into Serbia, the interviewee and two more people of the group were taken to the closest police station, where their faces were scanned and their fingerprints taken. They were monitored by Serbian officers while being detained. One of the group members was asked about his age by one of the policemen. When the minor replied saying he was 17 years old, the officer reacted angrily and struck him, shouting:

“Don't say you're 17, say you are 18 or 19”

The group were detained for an hour in the police station. After this the Serbian police released them. This occurred on the morning of 17th November 2020.

16/11/2020

## “YOU ARE MUSLIM, WE ARE CHRISTIAN. WE DON'T LIKE YOU”

**Date and time:** November 16, 2020 22:00

**Location:** Röszke border crossing

**Coordinates:** 46.175836198727, 19.976892316357

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: Unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground

**Police involved:** 7-8 officials in green uniforms (referred to as military officers by the respondent), 4 Hungarian policemen

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Two Afghani men left Subotica (Serbia) by train on 16th November 2020. After crossing the border with Hungary, they reached a train station at 18:00. At the station they were detected by seven Hungarian officers – the respondent referred to them as “army personnel” due to their green uniforms. One of the officers reportedly fired a gun into the air and ordered the two men to lay down on the ground.

The respondent reported that three Hungarian policemen and one policewoman then arrived on the scene and one of them started kicking and beating him with a stick while shouting:

*“You are Muslim, we are Christian. We don't like you ... If you come back, I will beat you”*

This attack occurred as he was lying on the ground next to his companion. In an attempt to protect his head from the beating, he covered it with his right hand, which was also hit by the stick. At the time of interview he reported how he had difficulties in moving the hand still due to the injury incurred.

After 30 minutes laid out on the ground, the two men were taken to the police station in the town, where they spent an hour sitting on the floor. After that, they were taken to the border crossing at Röszke in a police car, together with another man who was also pushed back to Serbia together with them. This man had difficulties to walk and told the interviewee that he had been repeatedly beaten with the butt of a rifle, causing the limping. Upon reaching the border with Serbia in the evening (between 20:00 and 22:00), the policemen made them walk back to Serbia, while filming them. No Serbian police were observed on the other side of the border.

31/10/2020

## “THEY WERE LAUGHING AS THEY FORCED THEM TO UNDRESS”

**Date and time:** October 31, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Near Horgos/ Rösztke border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.174064806594, 19.949288675333

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 3 minors (unknown age), 9 people between 20-30 years old, from: Syria, Yemen

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 police officers in black uniforms, more police in army clothing, one white police car with blue line on the side, one green car and one black van, dogs

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of eight people from Syria, including three minors and one family crossed to Hungary on the evening of the 30th October near Horgos, Serbia. They proceeded by foot for roughly 5-6 kilometres before they started to see lights in the forest in the distance. Shortly after they were met by six policemen in black uniforms telling them to stop while pointing guns at them.

The interviewee reported that everyone in the group stopped but the policemen still proceeded to kick group members, including women and minors. Shortly after, one white police vehicle arrived as well as a green car and a black van. It was reported that the beatings then continued, mostly with officers using branches from trees, for approximately 15 minutes.

The officers then reportedly searched all bags and clothes of the apprehended group, forcing all men to undress to their underwear while laughing at them. When the male officers proceeded to pat down the female members of the group, the male members of the group told the officers not to touch the women to which the officers just replied:

*“Shut up! Don’t speak! Fuck all the Syrians! Fuck all refugees! You are shit!”*

It was reported that the officers were swearing both in English and Hungarian, which the group did not understand. After they had finished searching their bags and patting everyone down, the group was allowed to get dressed again, apart from their jackets even though group members were telling officers they were cold. The group was kept at this location place in the forest for 3-4 hours. The officers hit anyone who tried to sleep. During that time, it was

reported that five phones of group members were destroyed by officers. Access to drinking water was denied.

After this 3-4 hours, four more people apprehended by police were brought to the same spot by an unknown amount of police officers. One of them had a bleeding head wound, reportedly inflicted to him by Hungarian border police. The two groups were held together at the spot for an additional hour.

Afterwards all of them were put into vans and driven to a location on the border fence to Serbia (exact coordinates unknown) where pictures of their faces were taken as well as a video of them walking back to Serbia through a door in the border fence. They were ejected over the border in the early hours of 31st October 2020.

**31/10/2020**

## **“GOING TO MAMA MERKEL? SORRY BUT NOT TODAY”**

**Date and time:** October 31, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Subotica, Serbia (Kelebija Crossing)

**Coordinates:** 46.164246930115, 19.55759136499

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: Unknown , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 15 Hungarian police, 10 SWAT/Border police, 6 dogs, 5 police vans

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The interviewee, a man from Syria, reported that he left from Sombor, Serbia, with a group of four other people on-the-move in the early hours of 31st October, 2020. After crossing to Hungary, the group walked for approximately 20km until they were apprehended by police between 02:30 – 03:00. While apprehending the group, the officers referred to the fact that the group would not reach Germany.

*“Going to mama Merkel? Not today, sorry”.*

The respondent reported the presence of 25 police officers during the capture 10-15 of which were described as regular Hungarian police and the other 10 were wearing different uniforms, allegedly part of what he called “SWAT/Border Police”. The authorities also had 5 cars (small vans) and 6 dogs with them (all of them wore a muzzle for the whole time).

After being detained at the site of capture, the authorities put the five members of the group into one car and drove them back to the border crossing next to the city of Subotica, Serbia. Their fingerprints were reportedly taken before the group was filmed by Hungarian police while crossing back the border to Serbia. The pushback occurred near the Kelebija Crossing between Hungary and Serbia.

**26/10/2020**

## **“STOP ACTING LIKE THAT, WE DIDN’T BEAT YOU THIS TIME”**

**Date and time:** October 26, 2020 03:00

**Location:** Röszke, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.1765079, 19.9921745

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: 13-28 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 6 male Hungarian police officers, 3 police cars, 1 unmarked green van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

At approximately 01:00 on the 26th October, a group of 13 people were apprehended by two male Hungarian police officers close to the Horgoš-Röszke border crossing, less than 1km into Hungary. Three members of the group including the youngest, aged 13, had sustained injuries while crossing the border, with the 13 year old severely struggling to walk due to a broken foot.

When the police officers apprehended the group they instructed them to stop, and called for more officers. Two more police cars came to the scene, bringing the total to 6 officers, all men. The police officers made the concerned group sit in a line on the ground. The group was sat on the forest floor for approximately one hour, and did not interact or converse with the police officers. After this hour, the officers instructed the group to walk and they took them to a green, unmarked van. The interviewee reported that the police officers, upon noticing the injured group members limping, shouted (in English):

*“stop acting like that! Why are you walking like that, we didn’t beat you this time.”*

No medical attention was given to the injured members of the group, including the 13 year old minor. The concerned group then spent approximately 30 minutes inside the van as they were driven to the location where they were pushed back, close to the village of Röszke in Hungary (46.1765079, 19.9921745). The police officers unlocked

a gate in the border fence and told the group to walk back into Serbia. The push-back occurred at 03:00 the same day, two hours after they had been caught.

**23/10/2020**

## **“THEY LAUGHED AS HE REQUESTED ASYLUM AND THEN PUSHED HIM BACK”**

**Date and time:** October 23, 2020 15:30

**Location:** Near Kelebija/Tompa border crossings, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.178916, 19.599714

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 27 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 Hungarian police officers, 1 police car

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The interviewee reported that he left from Martonos, Serbia with a group of four other people on the move on the 23rd October 2020 by swimming across the Tisa river to Hungary. Everyone in the group was from Morocco, two of them minors (between 16 and 17 years old), the adults were all in their mid twenties, all male.

When the transit group got to Szeged, Hungary the group split up to minimize the risk of being apprehended by local authorities. The interviewee then preceded by himself on a train from Szeged to Budapest. Upon arrival of the train in Budapest, a Hungarian police officer boarded the train and escorted him by foot to a nearby police station. There, police officers patted him down and found 300 Euros in cash in a bandage he had around his leg because of a previous leg injury. The interviewee reported that they then proceeded to take this money and also his camp ID from Sombor camp (Serbia).

The respondent spent approximately 1,5 hours in the police station where he asked for asylum but his request was declined. The respondent reported that the police officers were making fun of his request for asylum as he asked for asylum using the french term “asile”. The officers responded by laughing, telling him that “this is not Brazil”. The officers spoke some English but mostly Hungarian which the respondent did not understand.

After being detained the officers put the respondent into a car that took him to the Hungarian-Serbian border, close to the Kelebija border crossing. At approximately 15:30 they arrived at the

border where the police officers opened a gate in the fence and told the interviewee to cross back into Serbia. The interviewee reported that there was no one on the Serbian side of the border.

**23/07/2020**

## **“SENT BACK WOUNDED FROM HUNGARY”**

**Date and time:** July 23, 2020 18:00

**Location:** Subotica

**Coordinates:** 46.1005467, 19.6650593

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: Two 20 year olds; one 16 year old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Unknown number of Hungarian officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the 23rd of July, three young men crossed from Serbia into Hungary and were violently pushed back by Hungarian authorities. The group was comprised of two 20-year-old males and a 16-year-old unaccompanied minor.

The young man who was the primary respondent for this report could not give the precise location of where they crossed the border initially, only that it was near a forested area. After crossing in to Hungary, the group walked on foot for approximately three hours before they were approached and apprehended by Hungarian authorities. The respondent believed that they were initially spotted from the air by a plane or a drone.

Upon encountering the group at around 6:00 pm, the Hungarian authorities were described as becoming physically violent – hitting all three of the young men and commanding them not to speak. The officers destroyed their mobile phones and everything else of value which they had with them.

During this encounter with the authorities, the respondent received a blow to the head with a baton and was bleeding badly (see image).

After this, the group-members were loaded into vehicles brought to the scene by the Hungarian authorities and driven back to the border with Serbia, near the Serbian city of Subotica. There, the Hungarian officers took them out of the vehicles and led them towards a door in the barbed-wire fence which separates the border between Hungary and Serbia. They were told to walk through it, after which the door was closed and the men began to walk back

towards Subotica. On their way, they came across a petrol station, which they stopped at and asked for help. There, an employee called the local police who later arrived and arranged an ambulance for the men.

**06/07/2020**

## **“BEATEN FOR HIDING A PHONE”**

**Date and time:** July 6, 2020 17:00

**Location:** Homorud, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 45.98184699999999, 18.7887766

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 18 person(s), age: Respondent 26; 16 other adults; 1 child , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Hungarian border police and additional Hungarian officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

In early July, around the 6th, nine persons, including four men, two women and three children were violently pushed back from Hungary to Serbia. The primary respondent for this report was a 30-year-old person from Afghanistan; the other members of the group were all Afghan as well.

The group began their transit attempt by crossing from Sombor, Serbia into Croatia before reaching the Hungarian border near Homorúd, Hungary [45.979912, 18.801082].

Around this point, a group of Hungarian border police approached and apprehended the group at the border at around 5 pm or 6 pm and were not unkind to the group. This initial group of officers called for backup officers which took a considerable amount of time to arrive. In the two hours until the other officers arrived, the police set up a tent on the side of the street where the group waited. The new officers, who wore dark blue, were described as being “very bad” – very angry and loud.

“We want asylum here, we have children,” the group told the officers. They were told “no” and not permitted to speak. The officers made them kneel with their faces to the ground and kept repeating “look down, look down”; they were not allowed to look up. The man making this report says they were not concerned with having their faces seen, but with humiliating the group.

They checked each of the group members for mobiles, power banks and other supplies; a woman officer searched the women. The officers destroyed all phones that they found, as well as any power banks. They cut everyone's shoe laces and the cords of the mobile chargers. The man making this report had shoes without laces; they cut his shoes instead.

The respondent's sister was hiding his mobile phone on her body. The woman officer searching her found it. A male officer came over and began to beat her with his baton; the female officer was unhappy and gave the mobile phone back undamaged. Images of her injuries are included; three days later when she was planning to join her brother in making this report, she collapsed while walking, still due to the injuries.

They were then driven in a van for two hours to the border between Hungary and Serbia, near Subotica. The van was incredibly loud, clanging the entire time. When they arrived to the border, a door in the gate was opened and they were pushed through. They then spent the night in a wheat field on the Serbian side of the border.

**20/02/2020**

## **“WE TOLD THE POLICE WE WANTED TO APPLY FOR ASYLUM, THE LAUGHED AND SAID WE WERE ALL TALIBAN”**

**Date and time:** February 20, 2020 04:00

**Location:** Kelebia Train Station

**Coordinates:** 46.17900836186563, 19.62308356742128

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 26 person(s), age: 14-30 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings,

**Police involved:** 6 Hungarian policemen, 1 police woman. One police car and one van. Blue uniforms.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the night of 19th February 2020 at around 22:00, a group of 26 people from Afghanistan boarded a train in the area of Subotica (SRB). The group included minors as young as 14 years old. During the night the train began moving and crossed the border into Hungary.

Approximately four hours later at 02:00 on 20th February 2020, the transit were found by seven Hungarian police officers with dogs. The apprehension occurred at the train carriages came to a halt at a section of track just before the Kelebia Train Station (HUN) The police officers had one van and one police car.

As the transit group stepped out of the train carriages, the Hungarian police hit them with batons on their legs, arms, abdomen, and chests. When all 26 of the transit group had been removed, the officers took pictures of their faces as well as requesting personal information (name, ages, nationality). The officers also destroyed the transit groups phone charging ports.

The respondent explains how at the site of apprehension the transit group expressed the intention for international protection.

***“We told the police we wanted to apply for asylum, they laughed and said we were all Talibans”***

After this denial, the transit group were put inside one van and driven by the Hungarian police. In the rear of the van where the 26 people were detained was a police officer with a dog. There was not enough room for all of them in the back of the van and the dog bit some of the transit group, urged on by the police handler.

***“The police sent the dog to bite us. When we were inside the van, my heart was really fast because dog was really close”.***

At approximately 04:00, the transit group were taken out of the van at the border, where Hungarian police opened a door in the fence and told them to go back to Serbia. The transit group then had to walk for several hours to reach Subotica (SRB) in sub-zero temperatures.

**20/12/2019**

## **“DEPORTATION TO SERBIA AFTER ARRIVING IN HUNGARY BY PLANE”**

**Date and time:** December 20, 2019 00:00

**Location:** From Budapest to Subotica

**Coordinates:** 46.166349795726404, 19.55561473438093

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 18, 24, 50 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Multiple Hungarian officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

*[While BVMN partners – in the case No Name Kitchen – typically only collect reports on incidents which occurred within the previous month, we have included this case in which there is a nearly six month separation between report and incident due to the particular cruel and unusual push-back which it describes]*

A 24 year Afghan man, his sister (18 years of age) and mother (50 years old) were illegally and arbitrarily expelled from Hungary to Serbia after arriving at Budapest Ferihegy International Airport airport by plane from Dubai.

The young man who made the report had previously worked in the humanitarian aid field and was a social activist in Afghanistan; according to the respondent, he and his family were forced to flee when threats were made against his sister. They travelled to Dubai and flew from there to Budapest Ferihegy International Airport in Hungary on Flight UAE111 on December 19, 2019. The family arrived to the airport in Budapest at 11:31 in the morning at Terminal 2B. The family had travelled on fake passports and while the respondent and his mother were able to clear immigration controls in the airport without problems, the Hungarian officials recognized his sister's passport as fake and began to question her. The respondent immediately returned to her side and proclaimed his passport as fake as well.

They were taken into detention, "a small jail" within the airport [Budapest Ferihegy Airport maintains a short to medium term **Transit Zone Holding Facility**] and questioned until about 1:00 am. The respondent described being asked if he wanted to stay in the country [to claim asylum], and he confirmed both verbally and in writing. The next morning they were transferred to another center, the exact location / type of which is unknown. Lawyers and translators were brought in, however, the reporter alleges that the translators did not translate correctly; he tried to speak in English, but was told that only what the translator translated would be taken into consideration.

He repeated multiple times that he wanted to stay there. At first the Hungarian authorities agreed and said he would be in closed camp. He agreed to this. Then, in the evening at five or six o'clock he was told he could not stay and would be deported to Serbia. He questioned why he was being deported to Serbia and said that he had not come from there. Hungarian authorities told him to stop speaking and not make problems or they would jail him for a month and then deport him. He was also forced to sign documents that he did not understand, and then told they were deportation documents.

Sometime after this, Hungarian officers drove the group to the Serbian border, near Subotica. A second group of officers waited at the border, gave them their phones back and told them:

*"This is Serbia, you can go there."*

Previously, the man making the report said, he knew nothing of Serbia. He and his family entered the country only with dollars and he could not even buy a bottle of water for his mother. That first night they had to sleep in the wilderness and the next day friends in Afghanistan researched where to go. He went to Belgrade and spoke with officials and told his story. He was only told that Hungary is bad, but was not offered further recourse for this injustice.

**23/09/2019**

## **“THEY TOLD US WE GET BEATEN IF WE LOOK UP”**

**Date and time:** September 23, 2019 06:00

**Location:** Hungarian border territory near Ridica (SRB)

**Coordinates:** 46.03415503540634, 19.137610404681936

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 42 person(s), age: 16-33 , from: Afghanistan, Ethiopia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 8 Hungarian police officers (wearing florescent vests) , two white vans

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September at approximately 15:30, a transit group of 45 people – including 15 minors and one woman – boarded a freight train in Subotica (Serbia). The train did not leave until 23:30 and even before the train left the station, three people exited the train because they felt as if they were dying.

Finally, the train left Subotica (Serbia) and crossed into Hungary where it stopped after approximately fifteen minutes at Kelebia (Hungary) train station. The Hungarian police searched the train but did not find the transit group until one of the people-in-transit knocked on the door because he was afraid to suffocate. Hungarian police officers approached the freight carriage and opened the door. Upon discovering the transit group of 42 people the officers laughed and locked the group inside the carriage for about two more hours. According to the respondent the perpetrators of this act were eight Hungarian police officers present, wearing bright green vests over their dark blue uniforms.

After two hours, by which time it was almost 02:00 on 23rd September 2019, the Hungarian police officers came back and told the group to get out of the train. The people-in-transit had to kneel in a row with their hands behind their head.

|

## *“They told us we get beaten if we look up”*

After what felt like thirty minutes in this position, the people-in-transit had to stand up, and one of the Hungarian police officers took a photo of every group-member. They had to walk in a row to a garage nearby and were held inside it without food, water or sanitary installations for what felt like three hours.

After the the three hours inside the garage, the group was separated, seemingly at random. According to the respondent, one group of 30 people was taken and (as he later found out) pushed back to Serbia by Hungarian officers. This was done at the border near Csikéria (HUN).

The remaining twelve people, including the respondent, were held in the garage for a further hour. The officer who had transferred the first 30 people returned with a white van and the members of the transit-group were forced to enter. According to the respondent, the van reached its destination at the Hungarian border fence after three hours drive, approximately 06:00. They were then unloaded and ordered through a gate in the fence, leading to Serbia. As the group went through the gate in the fence, they were filmed by one Hungarian police officer and were handed out a paper which read that they were being pushed-back because they had illegally entered Hungary.

The group did not know where they were, but according to Google Maps the distance to Subotica (SRB) was 38 km. According to the respondent, there was nothing but soil and they could not see anything recognizable.

After what felt like an eight hour walk through high grass and field tracks, the group reached a village. From the village the group took a bus back to Subotica where they arrived around 16:00.

**06/09/2019**

## **“THEY WERE STANDING AROUND THE POOL AND LAUGHING AT US AND TAKING PICTURES”**

**Date and time:** September 6, 2019 20:00

**Location:** near Rösztke border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.16569080971125, 19.92076693672857

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 16-19 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, water immersion, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, forced into small dog cage in police van

**Police involved:** 12 Hungarian police officers, possibly 1 German Frontex officer, 1 Hungarian police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At 09:00 on 6th September 2019, a transit group of eight Afghan teenagers and men – approximately half of whom were minors – climbed into a container on a train in Subotica (Serbia). The train did not leave until approximately 16:00, and the sun was shining the entire day, therefore making it uncomfortably hot and stuffy inside the container.

Finally, the train left Subotica and crossed into Hungary where it stopped at Kelebia train station (Hungary). Hungarian police officers in Kelebia appeared to be aware of the transit's group presence inside the container because they quickly approached the container and opened its door.

There were approximately 12 Hungarian police officers present, wearing dark-blue uniforms, as well as one officer, described by the respondent as *"the German"*. According to the respondent, this officer had a German and an EU flag attached to his sleeve. When shown a picture of a German Frontex officer, the respondent said the officer he referred to had a uniform which matched the picture.

The people-in-transit were pulled out of the container individually. The Hungarian police officers frisked them and broke their telephones on the spot. One member of the transit group exclaimed:

*"Write to them that they just should not take our phones."*

After the frisk search, the people-in-transit state they were beaten by the suspected Frontex officer (*"the German"*) and then returned to the container. The respondent said that the group had to wait for another two hours inside the container, but it was hard for him to estimate the time because the group's phones had been destroyed. He described that as time went on, the air inside the container became *"too warm"* to breath.

Finally, the entire transit group was pulled out of the container. The Afghan men were told to stand spreadeagled with their faces towards the train. The Hungarian police searched them a second time, and the German officer started beating the people-in-transit again. He was using only his fists, hitting the people-in-transit in their chests, shoulders, and faces. One person-in-transit's nose was broken; the respondent described how:

*"a lot of blood come from his nose."*

The beating lasted for approximately ten minutes. Then the transit group had to form a line, cross their arms behind their heads, and march to a nearby police station. The Hungarian police officers led the group into the police station's yard, where an inflatable swimming pool was set up.

The people-in-transit were told to get into the swimming pool with their clothes on. It was around one meter deep, and the water was described by the respondent as *“too cold”*. The sun was going down at this point and the severe chill of the water shocked the group, particularly because they had been kept up until that point in a hot container with little ventilation. The temperature change was very painful. Further, while the men were in the water, Hungarian police officers stood around the pool and recorded the transit group with small digital cameras and their cell phones.

*“They were standing around the pool and laughing at us and taking pictures.”*

After what felt like 45 minutes, the people-in-transit were told to get out of the pool. No towels or new clothes were provided, and the men and minors recall how they could not complain about their treatment because:

*“talking is not allowed.”*

With their trousers still wet, the people-in-transit had to wait in the yard for an additional ten minutes until a white van pulled into the police station. The Hungarian police officers made the men enter the van’s rear, where they had to sit in “the place of the dogs”: a small meshed wire compartment, normally used to transport police dogs.

The van was driven by the same Hungarian police officers and the German officer who had detected, beaten and detained the transit group. The driver accelerated and decelerated rapidly, causing the people-in-transit to tumble over each other in their cramped compartment.

After a 30 minute drive, the van stopped at a gate in the Hungarian border fence near the Rösztke (Hungary) border crossing at approximately 20:00. At the gate, a few additional Hungarian police officers were present as well as another Hungarian police vehicle (Sedan). The new Hungarian police officers opened the gate and the transit group was told to cross back into Serbia. The group observed the fact that they were being filmed by *“the German”* as they were forced back into Serbia.

From the fence, the transit group walked through woodland, described by them as *“the jungle”*, for some time until they reached a small village with a road that led them to Horgoš (Serbia). From the village of Horgoš, the transit group took a bus back to Subotica (Serbia), where they arrived a little after 21:00 in the evening.

31/08/2019

## “HE KICKED ME LIKE A FOOTBALL”

**Date and time:** August 31, 2019 21:00

**Location:** near Tompa border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.15207122826409, 19.534154580875793

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 18-22 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** kicking, forced into small dog cage in police van

**Police involved:** more than 12 Hungarian security officers (with yellow vests), 5 police cars

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

### ORIGINAL REPORT

A transit group of Afghan men left Subotica train station (Serbia) at approximately 16:00 on 31st September 2019. They attached themselves to the containers of a freight train, which took them across the Hungarian border to Kelebia train station (Hungary).

An unspecified number of Hungarian police officers approached the train in Kelebia (Hungary), and began checking the upper parts of the carriages. While the Hungarian police was checking the train, the transit group became aware of another train leaving the station. They decided to leave their position, and climbed onto the other train which was accelerating out of the station (a transporter train loaded with pipeline segments). However, as they were climbing onto the new train, some Hungarian police officers spotted them.

*“Police shouted at us [through a megaphone] ‘stop, stop!’, but we didn’t stop.”*

The respondent believes that these Hungarian police officers contacted other officers further along the train route, telling them to check the train once more. And indeed, some ten minutes later, the train slowed down again, very likely at the train stop of Kisszállás (Hungary). As the transit group felt the train slowing down, they jumped off their carriage and hid behind some trees in close proximity to the train. There was a station building on one side of the tracks and an open field on the other.

Soon after the transit group had descended from the train, Hungarian security officers wearing bright yellow vests arrived in approximately five cars and searched the train multiple times. Approximately two hours passed while they carried out this action. The sun went down and the

transit group decided to climb back onto the train, hoping it would bring them to Budapest. As the respondent recalls, they needed to move from their remote location:

*“because [they] didn’t have anything for eating.”*

They climbed inside the pipeline segments of the same freight train to hide themselves from the police. As the people-in-transit were waiting for the train to start, the Hungarian officers conducted another check of the train. The officers pointed torchlights into each of the pipeline segments, thereby discovering the transit group. The respondent described how the people-in-transit were pulled out of the pipeline segments and thrown to the ground, noting the officers actions as:

*“so angry, you know?”*

In total, approximately twelve police officers were present. All of them were wearing the yellow vest with the exception of one “big man” who was wearing a regular police uniform. The respondent described this man to be the unit’s leader.

After the transit group had been discovered, they were made to stand close to each other, guarded by seven of the yellow vest officers, while the remaining officers completed the search of the train.

The Hungarian officers asked the people-in-transit whether they had cell phones, and did not search them when they denied having any. Instead the group was made to board the rear of area of a white and blue police van. The Hungarian officer in regular police clothes kicked the people-in-transit in their backs and legs as they climbed into the van’s rear.

*“He kicked me like a football.”*

In the van the people-in-transit had to squeeze into a tiny “dog compartment,” which was separated from the rest of the van with meshed wire panels. The respondent states that a time lapse of under five minutes had occurred between their discovery, and the subsequent loading into the van. The van was driven by two yellow vest wearing officers who had taken part in searching the train earlier.

After a 30 minute drive, at approximately 21:00, the van stopped at a gate in the Hungarian border fence, close to the Tompa (Hungary) border crossing (see Figure 1). The respondent described the presence of additional heavily armed Hungarian officers at the fence, who had arrived in cars without police insignia. One of the men opened the gate in the fence, making the transit group step into Serbian territory. The respondent recounted that the transit group was filmed by the heavily armed Hungarian officers as they passed into Serbia.

From the border fence, the transit group walked to the road leading back to Subotica (Serbia). The other two members of the group ordered a taxi, but the respondent walked the three

hours back to Subotica entirely on foot. With the last money he had on him, he bought a small bottle of water for the way.

19/08/2019

## “WE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE”

**Date and time:** August 19, 2019 22:00

**Location:** near Röszke border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.162525507831475, 19.908754768845142

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 16 person(s), age: 16-25 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, destruction of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 20-25 Hungarian police officers, multiple police sedans, one police helicopter

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A transit group of 16 Afghani adult men and minors left Subotica (Serbia) on the evening of August 16th 2019 with the goal of reaching Austria by crossing through Hungary. Upon crossing the border between Serbia and Hungary, the group continued walking on the Hungarian side of the border for approximately two and a half hours. In the early hours of August 17th, the transit group reached a spot in some woodland (referred to by the respondent as “jungle”) where they had been told they were “supposed to wait” for onward transit.

The transit group waited at the spot for almost three days. They slept on the forest floor without blankets. On August 18th, their food and water resources were used up, and they were still waiting. On August 19th, the group was discovered by Hungarian police. In the words of the respondent:

*“We didn’t have a chance.”*

The Hungarian police arrived around noon in several white police sedans. The officers were wearing dark-blue uniforms. In total, 20-25 Hungarian police officers were present and with them several dogs. The respondent claimed that a helicopter was used by the police to search for the transit group.

After being discovered by the police, the people-in-transit were made to sit in a line by the officers. Those who did not follow the Hungarian police’s orders quickly were beaten with black

batons in their torsos and legs. The Afghan men and minors were quickly searched by the police officers at this point, but no personal property was confiscated.

The Afghan men and minors were made to sit in this line for six hours during the hottest time of the day. All the while, the Hungarian police officers were standing in the shade a little distance away, guarding the transit group. The people-in-transit had used up all the food and water the previous day, and the Hungarian police did not provide them with any additional resources.

At approximately 18:00, the men were once again searched, this time more thoroughly. Phones and other electronic devices as well as money and documents were confiscated. Before the Hungarian police returned the items to the people-in-transit, they broke the men's phones. After the pat down, the police took pictures of the transit group with a phone camera.

The Hungarian police then forced the Afghan men and minors into a white police van. All 16 of them had to cram into two rows with three seats each. The drive only lasted for 15-20 minutes but because the windows were closed, it got very hot inside and there was not sufficient air. The Hungarian police officers were driving recklessly, swerving left and right, accelerating and decelerating rapidly.

At the end of the ride, the car came to a stop at the police station of the Rösztke (Hungary) border crossing. There, the transit group was put into a tiny cell of approximately ten square meters. The cell had yellow walls and no window. Fresh air was provided by a small ventilator in the corner. The transit group was still not provided with any food or drink, but they did have access to the toilet. They were soon joined by three more men of Arab origin who had presumably been arrested at the border station itself. The people-in-transit had to wait for approximately two and a half hours in this cell. During this time they were called out individually and photographed. No documents or other information was provided to the men.

Finally, at approximately 21:00, the Afghan men and minors were once again loaded into a van – identical to the one that had brought them to the police station – while the three Arab men remained in the cell. Hungarian police officers drove the transit group for 15 minutes until the van stopped on the Hungarian side of the border fence. There was dense forest on both sides of the border. Additional Hungarian border officials were present who photographed the men one last time and opened a door in the fence and told the transit group to cross into Serbia.

The men proceeded to walk back to Subotica (Serbia), where they had started three days earlier. After five hours of walking, they reached Subotica at 03:00, on August 20th.

**12/08/2019**

## **“GUARDED BY DOGS”**

**Date and time:** August 12, 2019 02:00

**Location:** near Tompa border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.15112546236652, 19.51754551765066

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 11 person(s), age: 15-25; respondent 20 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 15 Hungarian police officers, 1 police van, 1 police car

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Shortly after midnight on August 12th 2019, a transit group of 11 Afghan men attempted to cross from Serbia into Hungary, hiding on a freight train. Between the border and Kelebia (Hungary) train station, the respondent observed “unusually” high levels of police present. He described Hungarian police officers being present on either side of the railway track in regular intervals, presumably to make sure that people-in-transit would not attempt to leave the train before they could be detected at the Kelebia (Hungary) station. Among the Hungarian police officers in dark blue uniforms were also security personnel in bright yellow vests.

Three out of the 11 members of the transit group managed to avoid detection by climbing off the train prior to entering the Kelebia (Hungary) station. However, they were returned to Serbia later on the same day. At the station, the train drove through what the respondent described as a “scanner” – a place with bright lights and many cameras. The remainder of the transit group, including the respondent, was detected by Hungarian police officers in the scanner.

The Hungarian police officers used dogs to detect the transit group, by leading them onto the train, where the dogs helped to direct the Hungarian police officers to the transit group. While the dogs did not bite the men, they were visibly aggressive and left the men fearful.

Upon discovery, the men were told by the Hungarian police officers to disembark from the train. Members of the transit group had to sit down in a crouched position, with their backs bowed, such that their heads were in between their knees, and their arms crossed above their heads. They had to remain in this position for approximately one hour, which was not only physically uncomfortable, but also made it difficult for them to register their surroundings.

The respondent described how the Hungarian police officers – around 15 were present – initially stood some distance away from the transit group, using their dogs to guard the Afghan men.

*“When they left the dogs, the officers were laughing [...]. They wanted to make us afraid so we don’t come again.”*

Apart from taking pictures of the people-in-transit with a camcorder, there was little interaction between the transit group and the police during this time. The respondent believes that the pictures were compared to pictures taken of people-in-transit in the past days to discover and “punish” individuals who had attempted multiple border crossing. The Hungarian police officers did not search the transit group and used no physical violence. The respondent described observing the “commander” of the Hungarian police officers telling his subordinates to “finish quickly”.

After sitting in the crouched position described above at the train station for approximately one hour, the transit group was told to get up and walk to a nearby police station, around 5 minutes away. The people-in-transit were ordered to walk in single file with their hands crossed above their heads, such that they could see only what lay directly in front of them.

The transit group was told to sit down in a yard next to the police station in the same crouched position as earlier. They were guarded by four or five Hungarian police officers, who prevented them from speaking with each other with the threat of physical violence and did not allow them access to toilet facilities. No food or water were provided at any point.

After approximately 30 minutes, a white police van arrived and the men were told to get inside of it. Two Hungarian police officers drove the van and another one was placed in the rear with the people-in-transit. The respondent described that there were only three car seats in the back of the van on which all eight of the people-in-transit had to squeeze together.

The drive lasted for approximately ten minutes. As they arrived at the border fence, some kilometers east of the Tompa (Hungary) border crossing, another police car was present, which the respondent termed "for security". The Hungarian police officers took another video of the transit before opening a door in the fence.

The transit group crossed back into Serbia at approximately 02:00. in the morning, beginning their way back to Subotica (Serbia) which took them three hours. They did not encounter any Serbian police officers on the way.

08/08/2019

## "THREE MINORS PUSHBACKED FROM HUNGARY'S INTERIOR"

**Date and time:** August 8, 2019 03:00

**Location:** near Tompa border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.151283706351364, 19.517765966636148

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 15-16 years old; respondent: 16, from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** 5+ Hungarian police officers; 2 Serbian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the night of August 7th, six Afghan teenagers – all below the age of 18 – climbed onto a freight train in Subotica (Serbia), hoping to reach Hungary and beyond. As the train crossed the Hungarian border at Kelebia (Hungary) at approximately 02:00 on the following morning of 8th August, the minors observed that Hungarian police officers were approaching the train. Knowing that most transit groups are discovered and returned at Kelebia (Hungary), three of the six minors from the transit group decided to climb down from the train, to prevent the Hungarian police officers from discovering them.

While they disembarked, the three teenagers who remained on the train were indeed discovered and subsequently returned to Serbia by Hungarian police. The three others who had climbed down from the train (from now on referred to as “the transit group”) managed to evade the Hungarian police officers.

The transit group travelled onward to Budapest (Hungary) on a separate train, arriving to the capital at approximately 05:00 the same day. The respondent was not sure about where precisely in Budapest their train had stopped, but it appears likely from the respondent’s description that it was a freight train station close to Ferencvaros.

The transit group climbed down from the train and began walking towards the city centre. They attempted to make contact with acquaintances, but were unable to do so because they did not have a Hungarian sim card. Similarly, they were lacking Hungarian currency, and were thus unable to use an internet cafe. In the early afternoon, growing increasingly hungry and desperate, the transit group decided to return to the train station, where they had arrived in the morning. Their aim was to try climbing onto another train and head towards Austria.

The transit group found several trains to which they tried, unsuccessfully, to attach themselves. As each train started moving, members of the transit group attempted, but were unable to hang onto them. Late that afternoon, the transit group saw three Hungarian police officers entering the station’s precincts. First, the three minors tried to hide behind some trains and rubble but finally, hungry and exhausted, they decided to give up and turn themselves in to the police for arrest.

The Hungarian police officers, wearing dark blue uniforms, made the members of the transit group stand by a wall with their hands above their heads and their backs to the police officers. None of the police officers communicated in English with the transit group. Instead, the Hungarian police officers beat the teenagers’ backs and necks with batons and kicked their legs before handcuffing them. The transit group was then led to a blue, sedan-sized police car and driven to a police station approximately 20 minutes from the train station.

The same Hungarian officers who had arrested the transit group remained present in the police station. As it was a fairly large police station, a lot more Hungarian police officers were present but the respondent was unable to recall exact numbers.

At first, the members of the transit group were separated into single cells for approximately one and a half hours. The respondent’s cell was small, approximately six square meters, and pictures displaying forbidden items – knives etc. – covered the walls. Additionally, there were official inscriptions on the wall in Turkish, Arabic, and Urdu, among other languages. The cell had a small window.

The transit group was held in individual cells, from which they were called out individually. Hungarian police officers took pictures of them with their cell phones. The respondent's fingerprints were taken, and he was handed some documents in Hungarian, which the respondent did not understand. During his individual procedure, the respondent said that Hungarian officers assured him that he and his friends would be provided with accommodation and that they would be able to remain in the country.

After each member of the transit group had gone through this process, they were put in a group cell. There, the transit group was told that they would be deported shortly, despite the earlier assurances. The Afghan teenagers, who had not eaten for the entire day, were not provided with food at any point, but access to the toilet was granted to them at the police station.

Shortly after midnight on August 9th, Hungarian police officers ordered the transit group out of the group cell and told them to enter a police van, which was driven by two Hungarian police officers. The van was colored white from the outside, and the interior was divided by wire mesh fence into several sub-sections. In the van's rear, where the transit group was located, there were several brown chairs next to the van's wall.

The drive lasted for some two and a half hours until the transit group was told to get out of the van at a "door" in the Hungarian-Serbian border fence close to Tompa (Hungary). The Hungarian police officers opened the door into Serbia and told the transit group to walk towards Subotica (Serbia). Several hundred meters behind the border fence, the transit group encountered two Serbian police officers. They told the teenagers not to take a bus or taxi back to Subotica (Serbia) but walk the entire distance, which took the teenagers approximately three hours and caused severe blisters on some of the teenagers' feet. They arrived at around 06:00 in the morning – 30 hours after they had left.

**31/07/2019**

## **"WITHOUT SHOES, FOR FOUR HOURS"**

**Date and time:** July 31, 2019 01:30

**Location:** near Tompa border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.150353988622115, 19.51622495597394

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12-14 person(s), age: 15-25 years old; respondent: 22 years old, from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 6 Hungarian police officers, unknown number of Serbian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, assaulted (kicking and baton strikes) while loaded into parked vehicle

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On July 31st, a transit group of 10-12 Afghan men attempted crossing from the Serbian town of Subotica to Hungary by climbing onto a freight train. At approximately 01.30, the train was searched in Kelebia (Hungary) by Hungarian police officers and the men were detected. The Hungarian officers employed blinding torch lights to locate the men attached to the underside of the rail carriages.

At the moment of discovery, approximately six or seven Hungarian “border police officers” were present. An additionally, 20 men were present, who the respondent described as “private security officials.” The private security officers were clad in dark-blue uniforms and wore yellow security vests, without any police insignia. According to the testimony, the private security officers were involved in both the detection of the men and their detention. The respondent said that the regular border police were mostly standing some distance away.

After the transit group was discovered, they were asked by the private security officers about their country of origin and how many of them were present. The transit group were then surrounded by the private security officers on all four sides, told to line up neatly, and then to lie down in a “crouching” position with their hands crossed over their heads. They had to remain in this position for the following 15-30 minutes while the members of the transit group were being searched.

Private security officers searched the members of the transit group one by one. They destroyed all electronic equipment, including phones, headphones, and powerbanks, by throwing them onto stones on the ground. Shoes were also taken away from the group members and were not returned. Money and documents, especially “camp cards” from Serbian refugee camps, were initially confiscated but later returned by the private security officers.

The frisking was accompanied by intense physical violence. Private security officers beat members of the transit group indiscriminately with black batons. They exacted this treatment against the men’s arms, torsos, and even their heads. Additionally, the transit group were kicked by the private security officers in their back and neck as they were lying on the ground. Due to this treatment, some of the men sustained injuries to their backs and one man’s lip was split open. The private security officers also employed pepper spray, which caused intense irritation to many of the men’s eyes.

*“They beat a guy too much, and he is sick now. They hit him very much.”*

After everyone had been body-searched, the people-in-transit were told to get up again and were escorted by the private security officers to the train station’s police station a few hundred meters away. Most of the people-in-transit were told to sit down in a garage or carport-like structure. However, individuals were repeatedly told to get up and stand by a wall where they were searched once again, a process accompanied by further beating and kicking.

During the entire detention – approximately two hours – the respondent was not asked to sign any documents. Instead, pictures were taken of each man with a professional camera, and the private security officers also took several group photos of the entire transit group. The Afghan men were refused access to the toilet and no food or water was provided.

At approximately 03:00, a police van similar in size to a Mercedes Sprinter, drove into the police station. The transit group were told to line up and enter the vehicle. As they climbed into the van's rear, they were beaten with batons and kicked "to speed up the process." The van's interior was divided into two sections with a tight wire mesh. The entire group had to cram into one of these sections such that there was very little space. There were no windows in the van.

The van was driven by Hungarian police officers. The respondent said that the private security officers remained at the train station in Kelebia (Hungary). The drive lasted some 20 minutes during which the driver accelerated and slowed down rapidly and also swerved left and right. The reckless driving caused fear and minor injuries to the transit group.

The van stopped by a "door" at the Hungarian-Serbian border fence. The transit group was ordered out of the vehicle and the door to a road in the middle of the fence structure was opened by Hungarian police officers. More pictures of the Afghan men were taken by Hungarian police officers, and a door to the Serbian side was opened by the Hungarian officers. An unidentified number of Serbian police officers were present on the Serbian side. They did not protest against the transit group entering Serbian territory.

The transit group proceeded to walk into Serbia towards the town of Subotica. One man's feet were injured so badly that he could not walk on his own and had to be carried by other members of the transit group. As the men entered Kelebija (Serbia), they called a taxi for that man which brought him back to Subotica. The others kept walking for approximately four hours until they reached Subotica.

*"We walked without shoes for four hours."*

In the following days, several of the men had to take pain killers because of their injuries, and some of them could still barely walk at the time of this report being recorded, despite that being three days after the event.

**30/07/2019**

## **"YOU ARE NOT OUR GUESTS"**

**Date and time:** July 30, 2019 00:00

**Location:** near Tompa border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.10507596640581, 19.482774928605636

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: 4-40 years, respondent: 25 , from: Afghanistan, Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground

**Police involved:** minimum of 10 Hungarian police officers, 3-4 Hungarian police vans and escort cars

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the early hours of July 30th, a transit group of approximately 30 Afghans and Iranians climbed onto a freight train in Serbia close to the Hungarian border. The group included families with children as young as four years old.

Between 03:00 and 04:00, the transit group was discovered by Hungarian police in the train station of the Hungarian border town Kelebia. Initially four or five Hungarian police officers were present, but as the Hungarian officers discovered more and more people from the transit group, the officers were joined by two to three female police officers and 15-20 minutes later what was described by the respondent as a "Commando Police Unit" arrived on the scene.

The group was told to line up "like soldiers," while being guarded by the Hungarian police officers. The members of the transit group were asked to present identification papers, which they could not. They were frisked and their bags were searched. Cell phones, as well as other communication equipment were collected and destroyed in front of the group by the Hungarian officers. The respondent was one of the few who managed to hide his phone from the Hungarian police. During the entire procedure, single men had to remain standing, whereas women and children were allowed to sit down.

After the search was finished, its duration being approximately 40 minutes, the Hungarian officers made the transit group walk to the nearby railway police station where they had to sit down in a "yard." Twenty minutes after reaching this yard, the transit group was counted and divided by families and single men as well as by country of origin.

The respondent describes that single men were taken into the police station and beaten by the police. He was not himself subjected to this treatment because he was accompanied by his wife. However, he reported hearing the screams of the men. Additionally, some of the men subjected to this violence later told the respondent that Hungarian police officers forced the men to lie on the ground and kicked them with their shoes in the neck and legs.

The respondent said that the transit group was held in the police station's yard for approximately four hours. They were guarded by seven or eight Hungarian officers, some of whom the respondent described as "army" because they wore camouflage uniforms. The Hungarian officers talked to the transit group mostly in Hungarian, which none of the people in transit were able to understand. The respondent said he had to calm his anger in face of the Hungarian police' conduct:

*"Accidentally, a child let a salty stick fall on the ground. And an officer said to the child – the child that was four years old – "get that thing from the ground." He was very aggressive in*

telling this. I asked him: "Why do you talk like this to a child?" and he answered: "This is a clean place. You are not our guests."

No food or water was provided during the period of detention in the yard and members of the transit group were escorted to the toilet "like prisoners." They were discouraged to speak with one another and smoking was forbidden.

*"You cannot move, you cannot do any, you have to be silent!"*

At around 07:00, new Hungarian police officers arrived in three or four vans, each with the capacity to seat seven or eight people. The respondent together with 11 or 12 members of the "family group" were crowded into one of the vans. The respondent said the drive in the van lasted for approximately 35 minutes and their vehicle was escorted by a Hungarian police SUV at all times. At the end of the drive, the van stopped in a corn field close to the Hungarian side of the border fence. The Hungarian police officers who had driven the van and the escort car opened a gate in the fence, and made the members of the transit group cross onto the road in the middle of two border fences. The respondent reported walking for several minutes on this "road in the middle" until the group reached a door on the Serbian side of the fence. The Hungarian police officers opened this door and told the transit group to walk in the direction of Subotica (Serbia). No Serbian police officer was present as the transit group crossed back into Serbian territory.

On the Serbian side, the respondent switched on his cell phone, which he had managed to hide from the Hungarian police during the night. He found that they were located several kilometers to the West of the Subotica (Serbia) – Tompa (Hungary) road. As it was around 08:00, the morning sun made conditions uncomfortably hot, and the transit group, which included a four year old child and a pregnant woman, had no water and food. In order to reach the road and the Serbian town of Kelebija, they had to walk through corn fields for what the respondent said felt like three hours. In Kelebija (Serbia), they asked a coffee shop owner to call a taxi for them, but were denied their request. Finally, a fuel station manager was willing to call a taxi which brought the transit group back to Subotica (Serbia).

**25/07/2019**

## **"WHEN YOU HAVE GOOD PHONE AND MONEY THEY TAKE, WHEN YOU DON'T THEY BEAT YOU"**

**Date and time:** July 25, 2019 06:30

**Location:** Kelebija, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.19002362475978, 19.614124691388042

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 11-24 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 20+ Hungarian Police, 3 small police vans

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of ten people described in this report began their journey from Subotica, Serbia at 4:00AM on July 25, 2019. The transit group consisted of five adults and five minors, the youngest aged 11 years old. All of the group were male and came from Afghanistan.

The transit group left in the early hours of the morning and traveled towards the Hungarian border. At approximately 6:30AM the train they had boarded came to a halt. Being on the underside of the carriages the transit group were unable to see what was happening, but the respondent shared that he believed that

*“when the train arrives at scanner, they (the Hungarian Police) check the whole train”.*

After a few minutes the group members heard footsteps and saw the legs of people walking next to their carriage. An extendable mirror was used underneath the train in order to detect their presence, and they heard the people outside conversing in what they believed was Hungarian language. The transit group was ordered out, and emerged from under the train to see eight Hungarian Police officers dressed in black. The police stood next to the tracks which ran between the platforms of the station. The officers were arranged in groups of two, each pair spaced an equal distance from the others, forming the four points of a square. The transit group were ordered out into the middle of this square.

The group were ordered to lie down on the ground, in what the respondent described as a “sleeping” position. The officers then proceeded to frisk each individual, patting down their whole body and removing personal belongings such as money and phones. Those with inexpensive phones had their mobiles broken by hand, those with more expensive devices had them taken by the Hungarian police along with the money.

After the body search, the Hungarian police began to beat the group one by one. Four of the officers surrounded each individual and used a telescopic baton to hit them, along with punching and kicking their heads, arms and torso. During the assault, the respondent described how he curled up into a ball to protect himself, but from this crouched position the officers then drove their knees into his body.

According to the respondent, he believed that the ferocity of the beatings were delivered proportionately to the level of valuables the police were able to extract from each individual, and the number of attempts they had made to cross into Hungary. The respondent described how:

*“When you have good phone and money they take, when you don't they beat you”.*

*“When come back for two (second border crossing), more beating”.*

No-one in the transit group made an attempt to ask for asylum, the respondent suggested that this would only lead to further physical assault by the Hungarian Police. When the attack had finished, the group waited a further 20 minutes on the ground, surrounded by the eight

officers. Three small police vans then arrived, carrying more Hungarian police officers dressed in black. The respondent asserted there were a minimum of 20 police officers present on the scene, including the original eight who had apprehended the group.

The police marched them across the tracks to the back of one of the vans, and pushed all ten of the group members into the rear cargo area. The respondent described the cramped conditions in the back of the van and how they were forced to crouch in order to fit in.

The driver drove the van for approximately five minutes, at which point he parked it and two police officers from the site of apprehension opened the back doors to unload the group. The group members were brought out of the van at approximately 9:00AM.

Two Hungarian Police officers held batons and as the group members climbed out of the van, the officers struck them at least once and pushed them out towards the border fence by which the van was parked. There was a guarded opening in the fence described by the respondent as a "door". The transit group were ordered to walk through this onto Serbian territory. The respondent described seeing one man dressed in what he described as a "yellow security" uniform on the Serbian side of the gate who observed the expulsion of the ten group members.

The group then made the four hour walk back to their departure point of Subotica, arriving at approximately 1:00PM on the same day. The respondent described how they had pain in their bodies for several hours induced by the blows they had received from police batons, punching, kicking and use of the knee. The respondent stated that the youngest member of the group, aged 11, had continued pain in his wrist because of the assault inflicted on him.

**20/07/2019**

## **"THEY BEAT ME BADLY. I STILL HAVE PAIN IN MY SPINAL CORD AND RIBS."**

**Date and time:** July 20, 2019 04:00

**Location:** 3km from Csikéria, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.116, 19.516806

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 20-25 person(s), age: 20-30 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 11 Hungarian police officers (blue uniform), 5 police vans. 4 Hungarian officers (camouflage uniform), green vehicle.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, aged 22, a Afghan citizen, travelled together with a transit group of 20-25 Afghan people from Subotica (Serbia) to Hungary on 20th July 2019. At approximately 03:50 in the morning the group crossed the first Hungarian fence by climbing over it and were trying to climb over the second fence erected on Hungarian territory.

At this juncture, the transit group saw a vehicle moving towards them, which the respondent described as a “blue” Hungarian police van. Noticing this, some of the transit group managed to escape, while others were apprehended by the police (occurring at approximately 04:00). According to the respondent, the officers who got down from the vehicle and arrested them were three Hungarian policemen dressed in “blue” uniforms. The transit group was immediately handcuffed and frisked by the police. All their belongings, including cell phones and shoes were confiscated, by the Hungarian police authorities; the items were never returned.

The transit group was made to lie down on the ground with their chests facing down. One of the three policemen took out his radio and left a message which the respondent thought was a call for more police officers to attend the scene, and soon after four more vehicles arrived at the spot of apprehension. According to the respondent, all the vehicles were white police vans each having two Hungarian police officers on board.

After the arrival of the additional contingent of Hungarian police officers, the transit group was beaten by the Hungarian police. The respondent termed the physical assault as inhumane behavior, as not only batons were used to hit the transit group but they were also kicked. As a result, most of the people suffered injuries mainly on their head and knees.

“They beat me badly. I still have pain in my spinal cord and ribs.”

Afterwards, the transit group was put into the police vehicles and driven inside Hungarian territory to an unknown location (described by the respondent as a barren land), located some minutes drive from the second fence. The transit group was offloaded from the Hungarian police vehicles and sorted into small groups of approximately five. Each of these smaller groups was put in one Hungarian police van.

The respondent asked to access the toilet but was denied.

During this transfer, the group was once again beaten by the police with batons. The respondent was put in one of the Hungarian police vans, prior to which their handcuffs were taken off.

The police van in which the respondent, along with one of the smaller groups, was put in had two Hungarian police officers (one male, one female). From here, the group was taken to another location near the Hungarian – Serbian border which the respondent was what felt like 1 hour and 30 minutes away by car. According to the respondent, the police drove the van recklessly by speeding up the vehicle for most of the journey. The respondent also complained that they were exposed to extreme temperatures during the ride.

“It was a small van with no windows making it difficult for us to breath”

Once the group reached the Hungarian-Serbian border close to the fence, they were offloaded from the Hungarian police van and handed over to four officers in “green” uniform with a vehicle with some shades of green marked on its bodywork whom the respondent later termed as Hungarian “military men” (having made visual recognition when shown a photograph).

The Hungarian military men handed one paper with a unique number mentioned on each to everyone in the transit group. According to the respondent, everyone was ordered to hold this number near their chest and subsequently their photos were captured by the Hungarian military men by a camera. Afterwards, the Hungarian military men opened a gate in the fence and the smaller transit group were pushed back to the Serbian territory.

In Serbian territory, the smaller transit group didn’t see any Serbian authorities and they started walking in a random direction since they were disoriented. The place where they were pushed back to was a big field with grass almost at their head height. They continued walking until they found a road and from there they took a bus and returned to Subotica.

**20/07/2019**

## **“THREE DAYS WITHOUT WATER OR FOOD”**

**Date and time:** July 20, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Border crossing near Röszke, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17704213014047, 19.980558997193384

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 18 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** kicking, denial of emergency medical care

**Police involved:** 12+ Hungarian Police Officers, undefined number of Serbian Police Officers (Hospital + Police Station)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On July 18th 2019, an Afghan man climbed into a truck in Turkey, in the hope of reaching Austria. As he climbed into the truck, he dislocated his shoulder and severely wounded his hand. During the trip, which lasted three days from Turkey to the Hungarian border, the man lacked access to food and water and was exposed to severe heat. When he arrived at the Hungarian border on July 20th, he was in extremely weak physical condition.

According to the respondent's testimony, he was discovered by Hungarian border police officers at the highway border crossing point between Horgoš (Serbia) and Rösztke (Hungary). The respondent said that the Hungarian police detected him because cameras filmed him through a hole in the truck's canvas. The officers ordered him to leave the truck immediately. The respondent could not recall the exact number of police officers present at the border station or the number of police officers who interacted with him directly, but he said that he saw at least a dozen. Due to his weak physical condition, the respondent requested food, water, and emergency medical care but was denied all of them.

Instead, Hungarian police officers ordered him into the backseat of a Hungarian police vehicle identified as a Sedan (similar to a Škoda Octavia). Less than five minutes after arrival at the border post, Hungarian border police drove him back into Serbian territory. According to the man's testimony, there was no protest by the Serbian border guards. The Hungarian officers continued driving in Serbia for approximately thirty minutes, and finally stopped in woodland described by the respondent as "jungle," where they ordered him out of the car. Due to his disorientation and weak physical condition, the respondent was unable to pinpoint the location of the drop-off site, but given his testimony, it can be inferred that the site was South of Horgoš and East of Subotica (Serbia).

At the drop-off site, altogether eight Hungarian police officers were present with three vehicles. The respondent also encountered three Iranian men at the spot who had presumably been brought there from the Hungarian border in a separate pushback with the other vehicles.

The Iranian men spoke to the respondent aggressively, telling him to go into a separate direction to them, which he obeyed. The respondent struggled through the bushes for several hours until he encountered a Serbian man, whom he asked to call an ambulance for treatment of his shoulder and hand. Shortly after, an ambulance arrived and brought the respondent to a hospital in Subotica, where he received treatment for his arm and hand (see *Figure 1*).

After his treatment, hospital staff called the Serbian police. Serbian officers picked the respondent up at the hospital and brought him to the local police station. At the station, Serbian police officers fingerprinted the respondent and denied his repeated requests to be brought to a refugee camp. Instead they told him,

*"Go away. We don't have any space for refugees here. Go away."*

The Serbian officers proceeded to kick him in the legs, pushing him out of the police station. Desperate, the respondent asked a taxi driver to take him to the nearest camp. The driver was willing to do so only for 100 Euros, which is substantially above market rate. Two camps in the vicinity of Subotica denied him entry, and he finally found a place to rest from his ordeal in an informal refugee settlement in Subotica.

25/05/2019

## “WHEN I SAW MY HEAD, THE BLOOD WAS RED”

**Date and time:** May 25, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Tompa border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.169118178226434, 19.557683885999495

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 20 years old (respondent) , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting

**Police involved:** 6 Hungarian police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Escuela Con Alma

### ORIGINAL REPORT

At approximately midnight on May 25th, a transit group of six Afghani men attempted to cross the Serbo-Hungarian border near Tompa (Hungary) inside a truck. Because the date of the attempted crossing was in the middle of the fasting month Ramadhan, the Afghani men attempted the crossing in weak physical condition.

When the truck entered the border post between Kalebija (Serbia) and Tompa (Hungary), the transit group was detected inside the vehicle on the Hungarian side of the border. The respondent thought their discovery was due to an x-ray scan of the vehicle. Three Hungarian police officers opened the vehicle's door. The officers first discovered two of the group members, and demanded to know whether more people were present inside the vehicle.

Insulting them as “Taliban” and shining bright lights at them, the other four men were discovered and all men were ordered to leave the vehicle. At this point, the three present police officers began striking the men's legs, arms, and backs with batons. The police officers asked the men to present their identification papers (which they could not) and to stand by a wall at the Hungarian border station. The initial three Hungarian police officers were then joined by three additional officers. Thus, altogether six police officers were present. The Hungarian officers were wearing dark blue uniforms, but the respondent could make out few physical features due to rain and darkness. He did not think that they were wearing masks, however.

This physical assault with batons continued after the other police officers joined. Most of the beatings continued to be concentrated on the men's arms and legs, but the respondent was hit on the head, which resulted in substantial blood flow (see *Figure 1*). When the respondent made the Hungarian police officers aware of his injury, the officers did not provide any medical assistance.

*“I told the police my head is broken and my blood is red. He [responded] by calling [me] a motherfucker. Then I was very scared.”*

After physically assaulting the Afghani men for around five minutes, the Hungarian police officers made the group cross back into the Serbian part of the border station by running after them, threatening them with more physical violence. According to the testimony, there was no opposition to the men crossing back into Serbia by Serbian police officers. Once inside Serbia, the group walked, according to the respondent, for four hours to the next bus station. The next day, the respondent was treated at a medical station for his injuries which necessitated stitching of the wound (see *Figure 2*).

*"[The] police is very big, we are very small."*

08/03/2019

## "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, TERRORIST? GO BACK AND DON'T TRY TO COME AGAIN!"

**Date and time:** March 8, 2019 22:30

**Location:** Tompa, Hungary, near Kelebija (SRB)

**Coordinates:** 46.17481192859851, 19.55871582948555

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 14, 15, 16, 22, 27 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, pouring water over one's head, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 Hungarian police officers with uniforms, cars

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

### ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of five, aged 14, 15, 16, 22 and 27 were detained by the Hungarian authorities on the Hungarian side of the border near Kelebija (SRB) in the night of March 8, 2019, at 10.30 pm. Six officers in two cars stopped the group, shouting and insulting them:

*"What are you doing here, terrorist? Go back and don't try to come again!"*

They hit one of the children, 15 years old, with a big stone on his knee which seriously injured him and made it difficult for him to walk. The officers attacked also the other individuals with batons, beating their heads and backs. Afterwards, they took their mobile phones and money. They would never return any of their belongings. They also forced one individual to undress. After that, the police poured ice water on their necks and bodies and forced them to return to Serbia in the middle of the cold night.

24/02/2019

**“THEY FURTHER Poured COLD WATER OVER THEM. IT WAS A NIGHT WITH TEMPERATURES BELOW ZERO.”**

**Date and time:** February 24, 2019 03:00

**Location:** near Kelebija

**Coordinates:** 46.170006, 19.556975

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 13-15 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, pouring water over one's head, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 8 police men, 4 security guards (with black jackets and hats)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, videos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the night of February 24, 2019, three boys from Afghanistan, aged between 13 and 15, tried to cross the border from Serbia to Hungary near Kelebija.

The three of them left at 2 am from an abandoned house and hid in a train which crossed the Serbian-Hungarian border near Kelebija. At 3 am, when they were already in Hungary, four security officers with black jackets and hats searched the train and caught the group of three. Then, eight other officers arrived who might have been called by the first ones as claimed by the respondent.

The respondent recounted how they were roughly pulled out of the train. Afterwards all three of them were beaten with hands and batons, pushed to the ground and kicked. They further poured cold water over them. It was a night with temperatures below zero. They permanently insulted them:

*“Fuck you!”*

The attack lasted for approximately 15 minutes within which the three of them got injured and some of their clothes were ripped.

Afterwards, they were brought back by a car to a door at the Serbian border. Their photos and names were taken, but they didn't check their camp IDs or take their fingerprints.

The group of three was deported to Serbia around 4.30 pm and the officers took videos of the process, according to the respondent.

They opened the door at the border and pushed them back to Serbia. As the Hungarian officers didn't contact the Serbian authorities, the three individuals had to walk back for approximately three hours until they reached the abandoned house again.

The 13-year-old had several small wounds on hands and face and a hematoma on his face. His body was still aching from the kicking.

The 14-year-old had also wounds on his face and his body was in pain.

The 15-year-old also had a hematoma and his body was aching. He was further suffering from a cold due to the cold water having been poured over him.

**30/01/2019**

## **“FOR 10-15 MINUTES, THE OFFICERS BEAT AND KICKED THEM, AND ALSO DOUSED THEM WITH COLD WATER”**

**Date and time:** January 30, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Kelebija, Hungary, close to Kelebija

**Coordinates:** 46.1958608, 19.606629099999964

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: two 14 year old, others unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, water immersion

**Police involved:** Approximately 10-15 Hungarian male officers wearing uniforms and with cars

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the night of January 29, 2019, four men from Afghanistan crossed the border from Serbia to Hungary near Kelebija. Two of them were minors, approximately 14 years old. When the four of them reached Kelebija (HUN), around 10 to 15 Hungarian officers approached them with cars. For 10-15 minutes, the officers beat and kicked them, also doused them with cold water. The people on the move didn't ask for asylum and no fingerprints were taken.

They were immediately pushed back to Serbia.

26/01/2019

## “WHEN THE TWO OF THEM TRIED TO ASK FOR ASYLUM, THE OFFICERS STARTED [...] AND KICKING THEM EVEN STRONGER”

**Date and time:** January 26, 2019 03:00

**Location:** Kelebija, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.19414884807157, 19.619380982457415

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 22,23 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** kicking, pushing people to the ground

**Police involved:** 7 officers with a van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the night of January, 26, 2019, the two young men crossed the border from Serbia to Hungary, near Kelebija (HUN). They crossed at 1 am, and after walking for one hour through the countryside, they decided to have a rest.

At around 3 am, the Hungarian authorities found them and started kicking them for 20-30 minutes. The two of them tried to ask for asylum, but the officers started insulting them and kicking them even stronger.

Afterwards, the officers took their sleeping bags and coats. Then, they pushed the two of them on the ground into the snow, keeping one foot on their backs to keep them down for approximately one hour.

Later, they had to enter a van and were deported back to Serbia.

25/01/2019

## “FURTHER, THEY THREW COLD WATER AND SNOW ON THEM ON A DAY WITH TEMPERATURES BELOW ZERO”

**Date and time:** January 25, 2019 08:00

**Location:** Kelebija, Hungary, at the Serbian-Hungarian border close to Kelebija

**Coordinates:** 46.1756349515176, 19.59251693163162

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: 14, 15, 16 16, others 20-30 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, water immersion, pouring water over one's head

**Police involved:** More than 20 Hungarian male police officers (border controls, in uniforms)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

About 8 am on January 25, 2019, a group of 13, three of them minors, tried to cross the border from Serbia to Hungary, close to Kelebija.

When around 20 Hungarian officers found them, they started to beat the group of 13. Further, they threw cold water and snow on them on a day with temperatures below zero.

Some of the younger individuals asked for asylum, but the officers ignored their question. Without taking fingerprints, the people on the move were then pushed back to Serbia.

The victims needed medical support from the reporting organization, such as pain killers.

31/12/2018

## “IF WE CATCH YOU THREE TIMES IN HUNGARY, WE WILL BEAT YOU. GO!”

**Date and time:** December 31, 2018 04:00

**Location:** Kelebia, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.1958608, 19.606629099999964

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 15-20 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 8 police officers in uniforms, one dog in the back of the car

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of 12, some of them minors, was caught by Hungarian authorities near Kelebija. They expressed their wish to stay in the EU and requested asylum, but were told:

“No, we will send you back.”

They were then brought to a police station and locked in a car garage. It was very cold there and they didn't have anything to drink or eat. When they asked for a toilet to wash themselves, they were not allowed to.

After five hours, the officers pushed the 12 of them back to Serbia, telling them:

“If we catch you three times in Hungary, we will beat you. Go!”

26/12/2018

**“WE FELT STARVING. NO FOOD AND NO WATER AND NO AIR IN THE WAGON ANYMORE.”**

**Date and time:** December 26, 2018 01:00

**Location:** Budapest, Hungary, Budapest train station

**Coordinates:** 46.177663, 19.962285

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 15, 24 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** handcuffed

**Police involved:** 6 policemen in uniform, two cars

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the early evening on December 23, 2018, the two 24 and 15-year-old men from Afghanistan left Subotica (SRB).

They jumped on a train at the train station of Subotica and traveled towards Budapest, locked into one freight wagon. Therefore, once the train had reached its final destination some hours later, the two of them couldn't get off. They were waiting inside the train until the morning of December 25. At that point, they were really hungry and also the oxygen inside the wagon was getting low.

*“We felt starving. No food and no water and no air in the wagon anymore.”*

In order to attract someones attention, they started to make some noise by hitting the walls of the wagon. It took some hours and many further attempts, until a man came and spoke to them from the outside. The person outside of the wagon, who later turned out to be a security man, called the authorities as one respondent claimed.

Once they arrived, they opened the wagon and asked the two individuals for their passports. When they told them, that they didn't have any, they arrested them, handcuffed them and pushed the 24-year-old to the ground. Afterwards they were brought to a police station with a police car, according to one respondent.

After they had left the train wagon, the 24-year-old saw a sign with the name of the train station saying „Budapest ..“. However, at the time of the interview he could not remember the second part of it.

Once they arrived at the police station, they got their bodies checked. Afterwards the two individuals asked for asylum and one officer answered:

*„Yes, once we are finished here, we will bring you to the camp.“*

They were again put into a police car, still handcuffed, and one officer gave them between 15 and 20 sheets of paper to sign. They couldn't understand the content, but the officers forced them to sign them anyway, with their handcuffs on. Then the officers started driving them back to the Serbian border. The journey took several hours and at 1 am on December 26, the two of them were pushed-back through a gate in the border fence near the Serbian village of Horgoš. At the fence the officers took photos and made short videos as the respondents called to mind.

**13/09/2018**

## **“AND THEY MAKE US PUT HANDS UP AGAIN. SO LONG ITS SO MUCH EXHAUSTING”**

**Date and time:** September 13, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Horgos border crossing, Hungary, Serbian-Hungarian border

**Coordinates:** 46.17905246667683, 19.98332367477485

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 30, others unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, forced to do physical actions, e.g. holding hands in the air for a long time

**Police involved:** Hungarian officers, caught by 1 female and 3 male in blue and green uniforms, physical violence by one male in green uniform, deportation by other officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Escuela Con Alma

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of four tried to cross from Serbia to Hungary at the highway border crossing near Horgos (SRB). They hid in the back of a truck which was waiting in a line of other vehicles to cross the border. After about three hours the truck drove through the scanner, and the border officers detected the four individuals. There were one female and three male officers in blue and green uniforms who opened the back of the truck and saw the men hiding there. One of the officers, standing on the ground, hit the respondent with a big piece of iron 2-3 times against his lower leg, until it started bleeding and left the individual was in pain (see photos). Then the officers took photos of them and took them to a police station.

There, they were kept 3,5 hours while the officers threatened and punished the men, for example they made them hold up their hands for a long time. Then, the officers told them, that they would be deported to Serbia, made them enter a van and drove them about 10 km along the border fence. Two police cars were following them. They again took photos of the men and threatened and punished them further in the same way as earlier.

*“And they make us put hands up again. So long its so much exhausting.”*

The officers there also showed them a paper saying that if any officer used violence the men could take it into court. The man showed his injury and told the officers about the violence, but they only laughed about it. He also asked for painkillers and water, but they didn't give him anything. They got another paper, saying that applying for asylum in Hungary is possible in asylum centers. So, the respondent expressed his intention to apply for asylum and asked for permission to go to the asylum center, but the officers again only laughed about him and didn't comply with his request.

Afterwards the officers deported the group back to Serbia.

The respondent was afraid of getting in trouble with the authorities if they found out that he reported the violence.

21/05/2018

## “THE MEN EXPRESSED THEIR INTENTION TO SEEK ASYLUM, BUT THE OFFICERS DIDN'T RESPOND ”

**Date and time:** May 21, 2018 23:00

**Location:** Forest near Serbo-Hungarian border, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.37271374291519, 20.226788764609864

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 14 person(s), age: 3-4 underaged, others 18-24 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** About 40 hungarian police officers, 3 police dogs, 6-7 police cars

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On Saturday 21st of March 2018, in the evening, 14 people, (7 from Pakistan, 7 from Afghanistan, 3-4 minors and the others 18-24 years), tried to move from Sombor, Serbia, to Hungary. The people from Pakistan had walked towards Sombor from Subotica for three nights before departing. The whole group walked across the Serbian-Hungarian border, and continued in a “taxi” in Hungarian territory. They passed a big city and shortly thereafter, at about 11pm on the 21st, they were stopped by 3 Hungarian border police officers, who called for city police officers, (about 35-40, male and female, city police officers in uniforms), who joined the first group of officers along with 3 dogs, and about 6-7 police cars. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, but the officers didn't respond appropriately and instead shouted: “Go back to Serbia!”

The officers ordered the men to sit down and checked their bodies and bags with the dogs and asked them for their belongings. The police took mobile phones of some of the men (about 4 phones in total), threw water over some of the phones in order to break them, before giving them back to the men. They also took 50-100 euros from each of the men, cut the banknotes with scissors in pieces and threw them away. Some of the officers violently assaulted some of the people in the group, beating them with sticks and hands, as well as kicking them all over their bodies and in the head.

They asked for the names of the men and took photos of them. They didn't take any fingerprints, the men were not asked to sign any papers and no documents were given to them. Afterwards, at about 1am on Sunday 22nd the officers started to push back the men to Serbia in smaller groups. The group with the respondent (4 men), were transported to somewhere in the middle of a dark forest at the Serbian-Hungarian border. The group could not see where they were driven to. There, the officers again shouted at the men to "Go back to Serbia!" The men obeyed, and walked in cold and snow without proper warm clothes for the rest of the night and the following day and night before they reached a town, where they found a bus to Subotica (about 30 minute drive). From Subotica they continued by foot to surroundings of Subotica to a place where they had stayed earlier and found their residence destroyed.

21/05/2018

**"THEY [...] TOOK 50-100 EUROS FROM EACH OF THE MEN, CUT THE BANKNOTES WITH SCISSORS IN PIECES [...]."**

**Date and time:** May 21, 2018 23:00

**Location:** Forest in Hungary near Serbian-Hungarian border

**Coordinates:** 46.37271374291519, 20.226788764609864

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 14 person(s), age: 3-4 underaged, others 18-24 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 3 Hungarian border police officers (big men, border police uniforms), city police officers (ca. 35-40, male and female, city police uniforms, one big man with a camera), 3 dogs, 6-7 police cars

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the evening on Saturday 21th of March 2018 14 men (7 from Pakistan, 7 from Afghanistan, 3-4 underaged, others 18-24 years old) tried to transit from Sombor, Serbia trough Hungary. The ones from Pakistan had walked to Sombor from Subotica for three nights before their departing. The whole group walked across the Serbian-Hungarian border, and continued in a

"taxi" in Hungarian territory. They had passed one big city and only a short duration after that, about 11 pm on 21th, they got stopped by three Hungarian border police officers (big men, border police uniforms), who called for city police officers (about 35-40, male and female, city police uniforms, one big man with a camera) to join them with their three dogs, arriving in about 6-7 police cars. The men expressed an intention to seek for asylum, but the officers didn't respond appropriately and shouted:

*"Go back to Serbia!"*

The officers ordered the men to sit down and checked their bodies and bags with the dogs and asked for property. They took mobile phones of some of the men (about 4 phones in total), threw water over some of them, breaking them totally, and then gave them back to the men. They also took 50-100 euros from each of the men, cut the banknotes with scissors in pieces and throw them away in water. Some of the officers committed violence, beating with sticks and hands and kicked with legs all over the body, also to the face, all of the men. They questioned the names of the men and took photos of them. They didn't take any fingerprints, the men were not asked to sign any papers and no documents were given to them. After that, about 1 am on Sunday 22nd the officers started to deport the men to Serbia in smaller groups. The group of the interviewed man (4 men) was transported somewhere in the midst of a dark forest in the Serbian-Hungarian border, but the group couldn't see where they were driven to. There the officers again shouted at the men:

*"Go back to Serbia!"*

The men obeyed, and they needed to walk in cold and snowing weather without proper warm clothes for the rest of the night and the following day and night before they reached a town (after a similar journey before the catchment and a hard deportation), where they found a bus to Subotica (about 30 minute drive). From Subotica they continued by foot to surroundings of Subotica to a place where they had stayed earlier and found their residence destroyed.

**09/05/2018**

**"THIS HAS TO BE THE LAST TIME THAT YOU TRY,  
OTHERWISE NEXT TIME WE'LL PUT YOU IN JAIL!"**

**Date and time:** May 9, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Close to road 55, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17345324338263, 19.03871639577767

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks

**Police involved:** 7-8 Hungarian police officers (5-6 male, 2 female, in Hungarian local police uniforms)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On May 6th 2018, 22 men (20 from Pakistan and 2 from Syria) crossed the border from Serbia to Hungary, and continued walking for 3 days – about 94km. into Hungarian territory, before reaching road 55 on 9 th. There they got caught by 7-8 Hungarian police officers (5-6 male, 2 female, in Hungarian local police uniforms), with some police dogs, 2 police vans and 1-2 smaller police cars. All men expressed the intention to seek asylum, but the officers didn't respond. They took the group to the side of the road and started violently attacking them. All officers beat them with sticks, hands and kicking, on all parts of their bodies. The officers further ordered their dogs to attack and scratch the men, for about 15 minutes in total.

The officers addressed two of the men, the interviewee and his friend, multiple times, accusing the interviewee of being the leader of the group, because he was walking in front, when the officers first noticed the group. During the incident, the officers also insulted and threatened the men and shouted at them. "This has to be the last time that you try, otherwise next time we'll put you in jail!" The men asked, why they weren't allowed to seek asylum in Hungary even though they had tried several times (the interviewee states that this was his sixth attempt). The officers shouted back, "It's never going to happen in Hungary, you have to try another way!" Less than half an hour later, the police officers transported the men to an Hungarian police station which was about 30 minutes away.

There, the officers searched the bodies and bags of the men and checked their mobile phones and other belongings, although nothing was confiscated. They asked the men to show their ID cards (they showed the ID cards from reception centers in Serbia) and wrote down their personal details and took pictures of them. They didn't take any fingerprints, the men were not asked to sign any paper and no documents were given to them. After about 3 hours in total at the police station, the men were transported back to the Serbian-Hungarian border and deported to the Serbian side of the border.

**25/03/2018**

## "THE POLICE ORDERED THE MEN TO GO BACK TO SERBIA."

**Date and time:** March 25, 2018 00:00

**Location:** Horgos Border crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.171096659068645, 19.993680035156217

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 16-25 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Hungarian border police  
**Taken to a police station?:** unknown  
**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**  
**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes  
**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the evening on March 25th. 2018, at about 10-11pm. 6 men from Pakistan crossed the Serbian-Hungarian border by hiding in a truck, in a container. The interviewee and his friend were both underaged – 16 years, the were about 20-25 years. They crossed the Serbian-Hungarian border near Horgos, probably at Horgos – Rösztke Border Crossing Station. At the crossing Hungarian police officers checked the truck and caught the men. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, but the officers didn't respond appropriately. The officers searched their bodies and bags, and asked for their names. The men replied and the interviewee showed his identity card from Obrenovac camp.

No documents were filled nor did they take fingerprints or pictures. The men were not asked to sign any papers nor did they receive any documents. After about 3-4 hours the group was transported with car for about 10-15 minutes to another place on the Serbian-Hungarian border close to Horgos Serbia, where the police ordered the men to go back to Serbia. The men returned to the Serbian side and walked for 2-3 hours to Horgos Serbia.

17/03/2018

**“THE MEN EXPRESSED THE INTENTION TO ASK FOR ASYLUM, BUT THE OFFICERS [...] SHOUTED: ‘IT’S NEVER GONNA HAPPEN!’”**

**Date and time:** March 17, 2018 00:00  
**Location:** Hungarian side of the border near Bački Breg, Serbia  
**Coordinates:** 45.92748309639995, 18.964749179345745  
**Pushback from:** Hungary  
**Pushback to:** Serbia  
**Demographics:** 24 person(s), age: interviewee 27 years old , from: Pakistan  
**Minors involved?** Yes  
**Violence used:** dog attacks, forcing to undress  
**Police involved:** 7 Hungarian policemen (Hungarian border police uniforms, one with a torch, one with a mask and a dog), at police control place: Hungarian police officers and Hungarian army officers  
**Taken to a police station?:** yes  
**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken  
**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes  
**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the evening on Friday 16th of March 2018 24 men (from Pakistan, 2-3 underage and others older, interviewed one 27 years old) walked from Sombor, Serbia across the Hungarian border near Bački Breg, Serbia and continued walking in Hungarian territory. They moved the following night, then stayed till the next day on Saturday 17th, and continued again in the evening. Then, about 7 pm on 17th they got stopped by Hungarian police officers (about 7 men, Hungarian border police uniforms), one of them showing a torch, and one with a mask had a dog in an open spot in "jungle" there in Hungarian territory (the interviewed didn't know the exact location). The officer pushed the dog to attack some of the men, but didn't commit other violence. The men expressed the intention to seek for asylum, but the officers didn't respond appropriately and shouted:

*"It's never gonna happen!"*

They told the men to take all their clothes off and checked their bodies and bags and also money and mobile phones. The clothes and belongings were given back to the men, and after about one hour at the place the group was transported with a big police van about one hour drive away, probably closer to the Serbian-Hungarian border (the interviewed couldn't see where they were driving), to a police control place with a large tent office. Inside the tent some Hungarian police officers (male, Hungarian border police uniforms) wrote down the names of the men and took pictures of them. No other documents were made or fingerprints were taken. The men were not asked to sign any papers and no documents were given to them. There were also some Hungarian army officers but no international police officers present. After about one hour at the place the men were put in a big police van and driven away and left in smaller groups at different spots right at the Serbian-Hungarian border. The group of the interviewee drove about one hour, between Kelebia, Hungary and Kelebija, Serbia, where they stayed the following night between Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th. At these spots the police ordered the men to go back to Serbia, so the men returned to the Serbian side.

**03/03/2018**

## "THEY WERE PUNCHED IN THE FACE AND BEATEN WITH STICKS"

**Date and time:** March 3, 2018 23:59

**Location:** Near Horgos bordercrossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17691084463757, 19.97976152705826

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** unknown person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks

**Police involved:** About 10-12 policemen with Hungarian border police uniforms and dogs (some without muzzle)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At midnight on Saturday 3rd – Sunday March 4th. 2018 several men, (mostly from Pakistan, about 20-30 years and some older), tried to transit from Subotica Serbia through Hungary in smaller 4-5 people groups. The group containing the interviewee walked across the Serbian-Hungarian border near Horgos Serbia, through the border fences and continued walking in Hungarian territory. After a short time of walking within Hungarian territory they were stopped by Hungarian border police officers (about 10-12 men, Hungarian border police uniforms) and their dogs.

The officers ordered the dog to attack, scratch and bite some of the men and the officers proceeded to beat them with sticks and hands all over their bodies and in the head. Two of the interviewee's who got beaten explained that they were punched in the face and beaten with sticks on their legs. The men felt extensive pain afterwards, but there were no visible injuries for evidence. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, but the officers didn't respond appropriately. They didn't take any fingerprints, the men were not asked to sign any papers and no documents were given to them (no information about taking pictures). The officers searched their bodies and belongings.

Afterwards the officers locked the group in the back of a small van and made them wait there for about 5 hours. Early in the morning on Sunday 4th. the men were transported in a van for a short distance to the Serbian-Hungarian border, to a gate in the border fence on a bridge close to Horgos Serbia (probably Horgos – Rösztke Border Crossing Station). The police called for Serbian police to arrive at the spot and deported the men to the Serbian side.

**14/02/2018**

**“THE POLICE OFFICERS SAID THAT BECAUSE THE MEN WERE FROM PAKISTAN, THEY COULD NOT GET ASYLUM, AND THAT MUSLIMS WERE NOT WELCOME IN HUNGARY”**

**Date and time:** February 14, 2018 00:00

**Location:** close to Kiszállás, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.252974212572475, 19.56315330175778

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 20-30 , from: Pakistan, India

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** Hungarian police officers, Czech army personnel visited and told officers to stop violence

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:****Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes**Reported by:** Rigardu**ORIGINAL REPORT**

During the night of February 14th-15th 2018, 10 men (the interviewee from India, others from Pakistan, no minors involved) walked across the Serbian-Hungarian border near Subotica, Serbia. They continued walking throughout the night, within Hungarian territory and stayed in the woods until the following morning. Subsequently, a group of Hungarian police officers caught the men (close to Kisszállás). The police immediately started violently attacking the group, police officers beat them with their hands and stick and kicked the men for a while. Then a group of international army personnel (from Czech Republic) arrived to the place and told the police officers to stop the beating.

After the incident the officers let the men stay at the place for about 3-4 hours. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police officers did not give much response, and they did not give the men the opportunity to register for asylum. Instead the police officers said that because the men were from Pakistan, they could not get asylum, and that Muslims were not welcome in Hungary. The officers wrote down their personal details and took pictures of the men, but they did not take their fingerprints or handed out any written documents. Afterwards, the men were transported to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Subotica to be deported.

**27/01/2018**

**“2 MINORS, WHO DECLARED THAT THEY WERE UNDER 18, WERE REGISTERED AS ADULTS AS THE HUNGARIAN POLICE CREATED FALSE DATES OF BIRTH FOR THEM.”**

**Date and time:** January 27, 2018 20:00**Location:** Szederkeny, Hungary**Coordinates:** 45.9791014, 18.4658192**Pushback from:** Hungary**Pushback to:** Croatia**Demographics:** 31 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan**Minors involved?** Yes**Violence used:** no violence used**Police involved:** Hungarian border police officers (6 to 8) in blue uniforms with some patches at the arms**Taken to a police station?:** yes**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Unknown**Reported by:** BelgrAid

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of people crossed the border from Sombor into Croatia, by the river. They walked for 20 hours in Croatia and spent the night there. Once they crossed into Hungary, they walked for 7 – 8 hours. Nobody saw the police coming. They spent a day in the forrest and were then spotted by a hunter who called the police. First, 2 police officers arrived, and then about 6-8 additional police officers in cars. They were taken to a police station, where 2 minors, who declared that they where under 18, where registered as adults as the Hungarian police created false dates of birth for them.

The police took their fingerprints, photos, and they spent one night in the police station, before being handed over to the Croatian police at the border. The Croatian police were 3 people with 3 vans. The Croatian police took them in combi-vans to another police station and they were kept there for around 5 hours. The Croatian police gave them their phones and money back, which had been taken by the Hungarian police. The Croatian police also took photos of them and did some paperwork, before pushing them back.

Each person in the group was forced to sign papers, that signed them over to the responsibility of the Croatian border police.

09/01/2018

## “THE OFFICERS BEAT THEM WITH HANDS, BATONS AND KICKING”

**Date and time:** January 9, 2018 22:30

**Location:** close to Kelebia, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.20465301338268, 19.59495612636715

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 20-30 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

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

**Police involved:** Police officers described as Hungarian border police (12 male, 1 female, in blue uniforms), later 4 more young police officers, violence used by 2 of them (young males)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On January 9th. in the evening, 10 men (8 from Pakistan, 2 from India, all about 20-30 years) walked from Kelebija in Serbia and across the Hungarian border. They where stopped by several police officers described as Hungarian border police (12 male, 1 female, in blue uniforms), on the following night at about 10-11pm. in a forrest near Kelebia, Hungary. The men expressed their

intention to seek asylum, explained their living situation and plans for the future and pledged for appropriate treatment from the police.

The police officers didn't ask the men anything more, but called for 4 more police officers to join them. They searched their bodies and belongings, and checked to see if they had any money and mobile phones. The police took the good phones (two in total) and broke 5 other phones. They took pictures of them, but didn't write down their personal details, give any written documents or take any fingerprints. Then the men were taken to a police van, and 2 of the police officers (young males) violently attacked them, one by one when they entered the van. The officers beat them with hands, batons and kicking, on all parts of their bodies.

The interviewee was beaten in the face and directly to his eyes, so severely that his nose was bleeding afterwards and his eyes were bloody for two days, making it difficult for him to sleep on the following nights. After the incident the men were transported by van to the Serbian-Hungarian border between Kelebia, Hungary and Kelebija, Serbia. The men were ordered to go back to Serbia, so they returned to the Serbian side. The interviewee was proposed to consult a lawyer (the pictures taken by the police as proper proof of the incident), but he didn't consent.

**02/01/2018**

## **“THE POLICE ORDERED THE MEN TO KNEEL DOWN AND HIT THEM HARD ON THEIR BACKS WITH BATONS”**

**Date and time:** January 2, 2018 03:30

**Location:** close to Kelebia, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17676775015542, 19.610939025878906

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 3 police officers described as Hungarian border police (in uniforms, 2 younger and one older) with one police car, 2 male police officers with masks (in uniforms) with one police car and 3 police dogs

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On January 2nd. at night, a group of 15 men from Pakistan walked from Kelibija Serbia across the Serbian-Hungarian border and continued for about 10 km

inside Hungarian territory, before they were caught by 3 police officers described as Hungarian border police at about 3-4am. The police ordered the men to kneel down and hit them hard on their backs with batons, which lasted for about 5 minutes in total. All the men were in pain afterwards, and the interviewee suffered from pain in his lower back for a week and had to take medicine (no opportunity to consult a doctor).

One police officer shouted: "This is not Germany, this is Hungary, what are you doing here, go back to Serbia!" The men didn't have an opportunity to express their intention to seek asylum. Afterwards the officers called for more colleagues to join them (2 male officers in uniforms wearing masks, with one police car and 3 police dogs). These officers searched the bodies and belongings of the men. They looked through their mobile phone files and wrote down the names of the owners and numbers of their sim cards. The officers confiscated money from the men (several hundred Euros in total) and good mobile phones (2 in total) and gave the worse ones back to the owners.

They didn't ask or write down anything or take any fingerprints from the men. The interviewee didn't notice if anybody took pictures of them. The police officers used insulting language, and ordered their dogs to attack them. After about half an hour at this place, the police announced that the men would be deported, and they arrived back to Serbian-Hungarian border close to Kelibija Serbia. There the police ordered the men to go back to Serbia, so the men returned to the Serbian side.

**30/12/2017**

## **"THE POLICE TOLD THE MEN TO TAKE THEIR CLOTHES OFF AND SIT ON THE GROUND IN THE RAIN"**

**Date and time:** December 30, 2017 22:00

**Location:** Near Horgoš, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17914499196982, 19.974861144978604

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 18 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 4-5 police officers described as Hungarian with several police dogs, some with and some without masks, some described as wearing army-style clothing

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In December 2017, 18 men from Pakistan, including some minors and 4-5 people with serious illnesses, moved from Serbia across the Hungarian border and walked through Hungarian territory. On December 30th, late in the evening they were stopped by 3 Hungarian police officers in a forest, near the road 80. The police called for several more Hungarian police officers to join them.

Some of the officers violently attacked all of the men, the officers beat them with hands and sticks, and kicked them on all parts of their bodies. The men didn't express their wish to seek for asylum. The police transported the men back to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Horgoš, Serbia. There were several police officers described as Hungarian, who continued the beating and kicking, using harder violence than at the catchment place, resulting in severe pain for some of them. The police also ordered their dogs to attack the group.

The men with illnesses showed their medical documents, the interviewee proved his hepatitis B status and asked the police to stop this violent treatment, referring to their poor health conditions and need for special care. However, the police officers did not respond to their pledges and continued. The officers also asked if the men spoke English, and beat the ones who did not speak English even more. After the use of violence the officers searched their bodies and belongings. They searched for money and mobile phones and wrote down the numbers of the sim cards from their phones.

The police told the men to take their clothes off and sit on the ground in the rain. While being watched the police officers for the rest of the night, the men had to wait in the cold without clothes. They were further attacked by the dogs again. Once in a while some officers described as wearing army-style clothing passed the place. During their visits the police officers behaved properly but after they left the officers continued the mistreatment. The men asked for water and food but the officers denied this. The people suffering from illnesses asked again for a different treatment, but no answer was given to them. Nobody expressed their intention to seek for asylum. The police kept them outside in the cold and rain for the rest of the night. On the next morning, the 31st, the police ordered the men to go back to Serbia.

27/12/2017

## “THE POLICE OFFICERS BEAT THEM WITH HANDS AND STICKS, AND KICKED SOME OF THE MEN, ALSO THE MINORS”

**Date and time:** December 27, 2017 14:30

**Location:** Near Subotica, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 45.94565925725525, 18.841552734375

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: 15-30 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** about 30 officers described as Hungarian police with three police cars, about 20-40 years, police officers at the police station

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On November 27th. 2017, 22 men from Pakistan, some minors, started walking in Serbia. They wanted to reach Croatia by passing through Hungarian territory and were stopped by about what they described as 30 Hungarian police officers, with three police cars at about 2.30pm., in the forest. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police officers beat them with hands and sticks, and kicked some of the men, also the minors. The police officers were male and about 20-40 years old.

They transported them to a what they described as a Hungarian police station (the men didn't see where they drove). At the station several police officers searched their bodies and belongings. They checked their money and mobile phones. They interrogated the men, took pictures, wrote down their personal details and asked them to sign the papers. No fingerprints were taken or written documents given to them. The men explained their reasons for needing asylum and told them about the difficult situation being stuck at the Serbian-Hungarian border. The interviewee mentioned his medical problem. He suffers from polio that causes pain in his knees. He asked for a doctor but the police did not answer.

The men stayed at the police station for more than 12 hours. They asked for water and food after the tough journey across the borders, but they did not get any. The next day on the 28th. the police declared that the men would be deported back to Serbia. They transported the men in a police car for about 1 hour, to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Subotica. They arrived at around 8pm. After the arrival the police violently attacked them once more and ordered the men to go back to Serbia. The men returned to Serbia. When the interviewee arrived in Subotica, he suffered from pain in his legs so he had to consult a field doctor, who checked it the next evening.

27/12/2017

## “ONE OF THE MEN WAS SICK (FEVER, NAUSEA AND VOMITING) BUT THE POLICE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT HIM.”

**Date and time:** December 27, 2017 03:00

**Location:** close to Nagynyárád, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 45.934333528980495, 18.582687377929688

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 84 person(s), age: 4 of them 15 - 17 years old, most of the others 20 - 30 years old, from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 2 police officers described as Hungarian police (1 male and 1 female) with a small police car, 10 more officers with big police van, police station: several police officers (in separated room with interviewee 3 younger male, 1 older male and 2 female)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 26th of December 2017 84 men (from Pakistan, 4 minors about 15-17 years old, interviewee 16 years old, most of the others about 20-30 years old, some older) walked from Serbia across the Croatian territory for 4 days, then across the Hungarian border and stayed for 3 days at Hungarian territory. Then, on the 26th around 3 am they got stopped by what they described as 2 Hungarian police officers (1 male and 1 female) with a small police car in a “jungle”. The men tried to flee from the police and spread into smaller groups. The interviewed man managed to run away alone. When the police found him, they suspected him to be a smuggler for the others. The man denied, and tried to prove that he is a minor and only part of the group. The police called for 10 more police officers to come with a big police van. Some of the police officers committed some violence to all of the men: the police woman used pepper spray to the eyes of the men, so they couldn't see for a while, and some of the male officers beat them with hands and sticks and kicked them for few punches. The men didn't express an intention to seek for asylum. Then the police transported all of the men to some what they described as a Hungarian police station. It took around 2 hours to get there (the men didn't see where they drove). There several police officers checked their bodies and belongings and asked for property. They checked their money and mobile phones and broke some of them. They interrogated the men, took pictures, wrote down their personal details and asked them to sign some papers. Only the fingerprints of the interviewed man were taken. No written documents were given to any of them. Some of the police officers (4 male and 2 female) took the interviewed man to a separate room, where the male police officers (3 younger and 1 older) treated him with violence. They accused him for being a smuggler and didn't believe him when

he again tried to prove his innocence. The police kicked his legs and beat him with sticks. His knee got so injured that he needed to consult a field doctor a few days later. The police officers put all the men inside one small cell, where they had to stay for 12 hours. They asked for water and food after their tough journey across the border, but they didn't get any. One of the men was sick (fever, nausea and vomiting), but the police didn't care about him. In the next morning about 4 pm the police officers declared that the men will be deported back to Serbia. The deportations were accomplished to smaller groups and to different places on the Serbian-Hungarian border. 20 of the men were transported to Sombor, and 10 to Horgos. 17 of the men, including the interviewed one, were transported by a police car about 2 hour drive away to the border close to Subotica. There the police ordered the men to go back to Serbia, so the men returned to the Serbian side. When the interviewed man managed to go back to Subotica he had so severe pain in his legs that he needed to consult a field doctor. The man with the illness was in so bad condition that he did the same.

26/12/2017

## “THEY ORDERED THE MEN TO KNEEL DOWN AND THEN STARTED TO BEAT THEM”

**Date and time:** December 26, 2017 23:00

**Location:** Near Horgoš, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.184002303391836, 19.95229680898433

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

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

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks

**Police involved:** 7-8 police officers described as Hungarian border police (male, in uniforms) with two dogs with masks, 4 police cars, other police officers passed by

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On December 26th. 2017, 10 men from Pakistan, including four minors, walked from Serbia across the Hungarian border. They were caught by 7-8 police officers described as Hungarian border police (male, in uniforms) wearing masks, with two dogs and 4 police cars, in a forrest near the border near Horgoš, within Hungarian territory.

The police officers wrote down their personal details, and the men expressed their intention to seek asylum. As a reply one officer shouted: “This is not Pakistan, this is Hungary, this is not your home!” They ordered the men to kneel down and then started to beat them for about half an hour in total. The officers beat them with hands and sticks, and kicked them with hardened shoes to all parts of their bodies. Two young officers beat the interviewee (a minor) severely.

They kicked him with hardened shoes and hit him with stick on his back. The police officers further ordered their dogs to attack and scratch the men.

Some other police officers passed by the place during this violent attack, and during their visit the what they described as Hungarian police stopped the beating. Afterwards they searched their bodies and belongings. They checked their money and mobile phones. No pictures or fingerprints were taken, and no written documents were given to the men. The men stayed at the place for a bit longer than half an hour. Afterwards, at about 12pm., they were transported to the Serbian-Hungarian border, where the police ordered the men to go back to Serbia. The men returned to the Serbian side. When the interviewee arrived in Subotica he consulted the field doctors for his back pain. He suffered huge pain for weeks. The field doctors gave him a supporting corset and medicine (medical report from the clinic as a possible proof of the incident).

**24/12/2017**

## **“THE INTERVIEWEE WAS BEATEN SO SEVERELY, THAT HE BROKE SOME FINGERS ON HIS RIGHT HAND”**

**Date and time:** December 24, 2017 02:00

**Location:** Near Kelebija, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.180593053764, 19.555664104409516

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 20-30 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Hungarian border police officers (male, both in uniforms and civils), 2-3

Hungarian army personnel with dogs

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On December 23rd. 2017, 10 men from Pakistan, all about 20-30 years old, walked from Serbia across the Hungarian border. At around 11pm. on the following night of December 24th., they were stopped by several police officers described as Hungarian border police officials, all male, some in uniforms and others in civilian clothes, and what they reported were 2-3 Hungarian “army personnel” with dogs and cars in a forest. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police officers searched their bodies and belongings. They checked their money and mobile phones and broke one of them. They interrogated the men, took pictures, wrote down their personal details and asked them to sign papers. No fingerprints were taken, and no written documents were given to them.

The police proceeded to beat the men, one by one, with hands and stick, and kicking on all parts of their body, for what the respondent described as about 10 minutes in total. The interviewee was beaten so severely, that he broke some fingers on his right hand. The men stayed at this location for about 2-3 hours. Afterwards they were transported to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Kelebija Serbia, where they arrived early the following morning. The police ordered the men to go back to Serbia, so they returned to the Serbian side. When the interviewee managed to go back to Subotica, he still suffered extensive pain and had to visit a hospital there. His fingers were broken, so the doctors put a cast on, which the man had to wear for several weeks.

16/12/2017

**“THEIR LEGS WERE FULL OF BLEEDING WOUNDS AND SCRATCHES AFTER THE DOG-ATTACK, AND THEY WERE CRYING AND SHOUTING BECAUSE OF THE PAIN.”**

**Date and time:** December 16, 2017 03:00

**Location:** close to Bácsszentgyörgy, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 45.9662530209121, 19.031925201416016

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** about 10 Hungarian police officers (male, in uniforms) with police dogs (more than 5, one with and others without masks), violence from all of them, pictures taken by some officers (in civilian clothes, one civil car), once in a while some Hungarian army personnel and international police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On December 16th., 2017 at night, 16 men, (5 from Afghanistan and others from Pakistan, 7 minors about 14-15 years) walked from Sombor, Serbia across the Serbian-Hungarian border between Rastina, Serbia and Bácsszentgyörgy, Hungary. They continued for about 15 min. within Hungarian territory, before getting caught by what was reported as Hungarian police officers. The police asked them to sit down, and after a few minutes more officers arrived, so that there were about 10 police officers (all male, in uniform), with police dogs.

The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, and the officers answered that the border is closed and that it's not possible to seek asylum in Hungary. They didn't ask or write anything

down, nor did they take any fingerprints. The police proceeded to violently attack them. They released their dogs (more than 5 police dogs), and ordered them to attack the men and scratch them on all parts of their bodies for what was reported as anywhere between 15 and 45 min. Their legs were full of bleeding wounds and scratches after the dog-attack, and they were crying and shouting because of the pain.

Afterwards the men tried to defend themselves, but the officers started to kick them. They kicked the interviewee in the right side of his chest. He had significant pain afterwards, and he consulted a doctor who treated him. Some ribs were broken and needed weeks to heal (X-ray and other medical records from the hospital provided). Next the officers searched the bodies and belongings of the men. They looked through their mobile phone files and wrote down the names of the owners and numbers of their sim cards. Then the officers either broke or threw away good phones (4 phones in total) and gave the worst ones back to the owners. They took shoes from some of the men, including the man interviewed.

The interviewee reports that occasionally some international police officers visited the place, and at this time the Hungarian officers paused the violent treatment and behaved properly. The 'international' officers interrogated the men and ordered them to return back to Serbia, recommending them to go another way in the future. The interviewee also reports that what he described as Hungarian army personnel were also present. The officials called for one civilian car of some officers, in civilian clothes, to take pictures of each of the men.

In the end the police officials reportedly used pepper spray in the eyes of the men, causing severe irritation and they couldn't see for a while. After what was reported as about 1-2 hours at this location, the police announced that they were deporting the men, and they were transported directly to the border near there. The police ordered the men to go back to Serbia, so they did. When the interviewee managed to go back to Sombor, he had such severe pain in his chest that he needed to consult doctors.

**29/11/2017**

**“FIRST THE TWO POLICE OFFICERS USED PEPPER SPRAY ON THEM, SO THAT THEY WERE NOT ABLE TO SEE ANYTHING. THEN THE MEN WERE BEATEN WITH FISTS, BATONS AND KICKING TO ALL PARTS OF THEIR BODY”**

**Date and time:** November 29, 2017 15:15

**Location:** Budapest, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 47.497912, 19.040234999999994

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 35 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan, North Africa

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks

**Police involved:** two Hungarian police officers with one police car, officers at the police station

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On November 29th. 2017, 35 men from North Africa and Pakistan, who are between 19 and 50 years old and one minor (14 years), travelled by car from Serbia across the Hungarian border. They were caught by what was described as two Hungarian police officers with one police car on the same day, at about at 3.15pm near Budapest. The police ordered the driver to open the doors and show them the passengers. The police asked if the men spoke English. The men were afraid that the police would accuse them of illegal entry and expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police transported them to a police station in Budapest (the men didn't see where they drove), where they arrived at about 4.30pm. There, several police officers interrogated the men, took pictures, wrote down their personal details and asked them to sign papers. No fingerprints were taken, and no written documents were given to them.

The police declared that if the men want to apply for asylum they would get registered at closed camps and that the procedure would last six months. The men asked for possibilities to stay at open camps and said that otherwise they did not want this. They explained their reasons for asking for asylum, huge political and economical problems and persecution in Pakistan made them want to flee. The interviewee showed them his injured leg and the police called a doctor to check this. The doctor was about to take the man to the hospital to treat the leg, but the police denied it.

Afterwards some of the officers violently attacked them, beating the men with fists for a few minutes. The police declared that the men would be deported back to Serbia. After about 2 hours at the police station, what were described as 2 Hungarian police officers transported the men in a big police bus to the Serbian border close to Subotica, between the border fences, where they arrived at around 7pm. The police searched their bodies and belongings. Afterwards another more severe violent attack occurred. The officers ordered the men to kneel down and put their hands behind their neck. First the two police officers reportedly used pepper spray on them, so that they were not able to see anything. Then the men were beaten with fists, batons and kicks to all parts of their body. Because of the pepper spray the men could not see the involved officers. Then the police ordered the two dogs to attack and scratch the men all over their bodies. In total this violent attack lasted for about half an hour. The police ordered them to go back to Serbia and not to come back.

27/11/2017

## “THE POLICE BEAT THEM WITH STICKS AND KICKED THEM ALL OVER THEIR BODIES, AND ALSO USED TEARGAS TO SPRAY THEM IN THEIR EYES AND MOUTH”

**Date and time:** November 27, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Near Mórahalom, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.2179218, 19.883720000000004

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, dog attacks

**Police involved:** Hungarian border police with uniforms, catchment and violence several (about 15) Hungarian border police in blue uniforms (security of border written on the back) with 3 police dogs, with masks by several police cars, police station and deportation: several police, transportation: big police van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On November 26th-28th 2017, 20 men walked from Horgos Serbia across the Serbian-Hungarian border and continued inside Hungarian territory, before they were caught by several (about 15) what were described as Hungarian border police officers. The officers were in blue uniforms which the respondent suggests had 'Border Security' written on the back, with 3 police dogs and several police cars. The apprehension took place near Morahalom, Hungary at about 12pm. The police asked for their nationalities and searched their bodies and belongings, the men expressed their intention to seek asylum.

Afterwards the police violently assaulted them. All of the police officers surrounded the men and let their 3 police dogs attack the men and scratch them all over their bodies. Then 2-3 officers violently attacked the men one by one. The police beat them with stick (long thin black with armrest) and kicked them all over their bodies, and also reportedly used teargas to spray them in their eyes and mouth. They beat each person for what was estimated as about 15 minutes. Then the men were transported in a big police van to a police station nearby, estimated as a 20 minute drive away. There the men were interrogated, one by one, while the others stayed in what was described as a big cold hall.

The men once again expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police asked the men to fill in a form with their identity details and information about their route and destination, but no fingerprints or pictures were taken. The men asked for water and food, but the police did not give them any. After about 5 hours at the police station, the men were transported in a big

police van for about 2 hours, to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Subotica Serbia. The Hungarian border police took pictures of the men and then pushed them back to the Serbian side.

24/11/2017

## “WHEN THE MEN PASSED THROUGH THE BORDER FENCE, THEY WERE HIT WITH ELECTRIC SHOCK FROM THE ELECTRIC WIRE”

**Date and time:** November 24, 2017 08:00

**Location:** Kelebija, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 46.160317, 19.5579

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 36 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan, Somalia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock, dog attacks, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Hungarian police with uniforms, catchment and police station: several police, deportation: several border police with blue uniforms and two Hungarian military persons with two police dogs with masks, other group of 12 people several border police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On November 15th-24th. 2017, 36 men walked from Sombor, Serbia, across the Serbian-Croatian border, through Croatian territory and across the Croatian-Hungarian border. They walked without water and food, and were caught on November 24th. at 8am, by what was described as several (10-20) Hungarian police officers on a road, after about 3-4 hours of walking from the border-crossing, within Hungarian territory.

The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, and were transported to a police station nearby, less than one hour drive away. At the station several police officers took their personal details and noted their destination, while taking their personal details the police officers asked the minors to falsify their age, registering them as adults over the age of 18. The men once again expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police searched their bodies and belongings. They checked their mobile phones and memory cards and confiscated some of them, as well as their money and other valuable items, for example some watches and rings. The police took pictures but not fingerprints, and the men didn't receive any written documents.

The respondent reports that all the men were placed in one small cell for about 12 hours. The men asked for food and water, but the police did not provide any. The police said that getting asylum is not possible in Hungary, that it's only possible for minors and denied that the minors in the group were actually underage. On the 24th-25th, after being detained, the men were divided to 4 smaller groups, which were transported to different places on the Serbian-Hungarian border. The respondent stated that police (described as Hungarian border officials) and other officers thought to be army officials, pushed the men back to the Serbian side.

The treatment varied between these places. The interviewee, was in a group of 12 men, who were transported in a police van for about 3-4 hours to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Kelebija, Serbia, where they stated several Hungarian border police and two Hungarian "military officers" deported them to the Serbian side. The men were ordered to go back to the Serbian side without coming back, so they started to run away. At the same time the police opened the door of their van and released two police dogs. The dogs chased the men, attacked and scratched them. When the men passed through the border fence, they were hit with electric shock from the electric wire. When the men were trying to escape the dogs, they got injuries on their feet and some of them fell down and broke limbs.

**23/11/2017**

## **"THEY WERE BEATEN WITH FISTS, STICKS AND KICKING ON ALL PARTS OF THEIR BODY"**

**Date and time:** November 23, 2017 16:00

**Location:** Near Horgos crossing, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.1793272, 19.983020500000066

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 28 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan, Nepal

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Hungarian male border police, catchment and violence: several (8-9) police in blue uniforms with 3 police dogs and small civil car, transportation to deportation with big police van

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On November 22-23rd 2017, 28 men walked from Subotica, Serbia, across the Serbian-Hungarian border and report being caught by several (8-9) policemen in blue uniforms, with 3 police dogs with muzzles and a small civilian car. They were caught after about 2-3 hours of walking into Hungarian territory on the 23rd at about 4-5am. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, and the police asked for their personal details, their route and

destination, and took pictures of them. The police also searched their bodies and belongings, and some money and electric devices were confiscated.

Afterwards the police violently assaulted them, and used the police dogs against them. They were beaten with fists, sticks and kicking on all parts of their body. They were further attacked by the dogs. Afterwards the men were transported in what was described as a big police van to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Horgos Serbia. On the following morning at about 7-8am. The police ordered the men to go back to the Serbian side. The men ran away and walked back to Subotica Serbia.

**20/11/2017**

## **“THE POLICE FORCED THE MEN TO STAND UP TOWARDS THE BACK OF THE VAN, HANDS RAISED BEHIND THEIR NECK AND SPRAYED THEM WITH PEPPER SPRAY”**

**Date and time:** November 20, 2017 03:00

**Location:** Near Horgos, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.174053, 19.931763

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Hungarian male border police officers with blue uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On November 19th-20th. 2017 at night, 6 men walked from Horgos, Serbia, across the Serbian-Hungarian border. They describe being caught by what they reported as several border police officers with small blue police cars, about 3 km from the border on November 20th. at about at 3 am. The police forced the men to stand up against the back of the van, hands raised behind their neck and sprayed them with pepper spray for about 5 minutes. Afterwards they surrounded the men, so that several police officers were around each of them. The police officers kicked them all over their bodies and hit them for about 10 minutes. The police had 3 police dogs on leashes, which they released, ordering them to attack the men.

The interviewee protected himself with a blanket, but his friend got bitten in his arm. Afterwards the police searched their bodies and belongings, they found small scissors in the pocket of the interviewee and used them to cut his phone charger and shoelaces. They also

broke two phones from the other men. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, so the police asked for their personal details and destination, but didn't give them any written documents.

Next the police handcuffed the men, in squat position and transported them in a big police van to the Serbian-Hungarian border near their place of apprehension. The police drove really fast (about 200 km/h), so that the men in the back of the car were being thrown around. At the border, on the same night at 4am, the police ordered the men to go back to the Serbian side, so the men ran away to Horgos, Serbia.

**19/11/2017**

## **“3-4 POLICE OFFICERS BEAT HIM, PUNCHING HIM ON ALL PARTS OF HIS BODY AND IN THE FACE”**

**Date and time:** November 19, 2017 23:00

**Location:** Harkány, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 45.856594, 18.237185

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 12-30 , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** Hungarian male border police with uniforms/ catchment: 2 police without police car, several (6-8) police with two big police vans (grey-white color)/ police station: several policemen, violence to interviewed person: 3-4 policemen

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On November 19-20th 2017, 2 men walked from Horgos, Serbia across the Serbian-Hungarian border and were caught by 2 border police officers near Harkany, Hungary. The men expressed their intention to seek for asylum, and the police called for several more (6-8) police officers with what were described as 2 big police vans. The men were transported to a nearby police station. They explained that they left their home country because they were convicted for crimes without proof and adequate trials.

At the same time 10 other men crossed the border by car, and were caught by what were described as Hungarian border police somewhere near the apprehension point of the 2 men. They were also transported to a Hungarian police station near there where they were interrogated.

At the police station, several police officers wrote down the personal details of the initial two men mentioned, their route and destination, and the men again expressed their intention to seek asylum. The police accused them of being smugglers for the other group of 10 people, but the men denied it. Then they were taken to separate rooms, where the police violently assaulted them. According to the interviewee, he was beaten by 3-4 police officers who punched him on all parts of his body and in the face, for what he estimated as about 10-20 min. At the same time they asked questions, for example where he came from and what he knows about the group of people, he answered truthfully, but the police accused him of lying and beat him even more. In the second room, the other man was treated similarly.

Afterwards the police finished filling in their papers. They handed out the documents and the men were asked to sign them, the police also took pictures of the men, but no fingerprints were taken. After about 4-6 hours at the police station, the men report being transported in a big police van to the Serbian-Hungarian border near Kelebija. At about 5pm., the group of 10 people were picked up from the police station where they were interrogated. At the border, at about at 6-7pm., the police ordered all 12 men to go back to the Serbian side, so the men ran away and walked back to Horgos, Serbia.

17/11/2017

## “ALL OF THE POLICE OFFICERS SURROUNDED THE MEN AND ATTACKED THEM”

**Date and time:** November 17, 2017 21:00

**Location:** Near Subotica, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.184311, 19.703865

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 15-30 , from: Pakistan, Nepal, India

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks

**Police involved:** Hungarian male border police with blue uniforms, catchment and violence: 4 border police officers, 2 police dogs, deportation in big police vans

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On November 17th. 2017, 20 men walked from Subotica Serbia across the Serbian-Hungarian border and were caught by 4 border police officers, about 1 km. into Hungarian territory, at 9pm. The men expressed their intention to seek asylum, so the police asked for their personal details and destination. The police laughed about the origin of the men and their intentions. They searched their bodies and belongings, and proceeded to violently assault them.

The police forced the men to kneel down and look towards the ground. All of the police officers surrounded the men and attacked them. The police beat the men using palms, fists, sticks and kicking them on all parts of their body. The police further let their 2 dogs attack the men, scratching and biting them. The interviewee was scratched by dogs, and a week later he still had wounds on his right wrist, right ring finger and left middle finger. The assault lasted for about 10 min.

Next the police transported the men in a big police van to the Serbian-Hungarian border near the catchment place, where they were forced to go back to Serbia.

**21/09/2017**

**“THEY WERE KICKED ONE BY ONE, AND THE POLICE ORDERED THEM TO 'GO TO SUBOTICA, DON'T COME BACK!'”**

**Date and time:** September 21, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Near Tompa, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.169429361404, 19.563903808594

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** kicking

**Police involved:** Hungarian border police, 3 members of special forces, 4 police men, and 4 police women

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A 20 year old person from Afghanistan reports that he was pushed back from Hungary to Serbia, on September 21st, 2017. He states that the police caught him along with a group of 6 people, approximately 20km after the border, on a highway in Hungary. They were 3 officers, whom the respondent alleges were members of Hungarian special forces (*“army police officers”* according to our interviewee) and 4 police men on the road with 3 police women. The interviewee recalls that the officers asked them where they were going, and they answered Austria. Their phones were taken. They waited 1 hour on the highway while their mobiles were checked, as well as their belongings.

The interviewee reports that then, a car arrived, and they asked for their belongings back, but nothing was given back to them. They were kicked one by one, and the police ordered them to

"go to Subotica, don't come back!". The officers also took pictures of them, and asked for their names and filled out a document with their information.

01/08/2017

## "ONCE IN A WHILE INTERNATIONAL POLICE OFFICERS VISITED THE PLACE, AND AT THIS TIME THE HUNGARIAN OFFICERS WOULD PAUSE THE VIOLENT TREATMENT OF THE MEN"

**Date and time:** August 1, 2017 22:00

**Location:** Near Bácsszentgyörgy, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 45.96864140801111, 19.034651804199257

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 17 person(s), age: 14-30 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Hungarian border police officers (10-15 men, in blue uniforms) with dogs (one with, the others without muzzle), Hungarian army officers, plain-clothes officials, international officers (more than 6, in police uniforms)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Rigardu

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 1st, 2017 in the evening, 16-17 men (7 minors) walked from Sombor, Serbia across the Serbian-Hungarian border between Rastina, Serbia and Bacsszentgyörgy, Hungary, and continued for about 15 min inside Hungarian territory. They were caught by the Hungarian police officers at about 10 pm. The police asked the men to sit down, and after a few minutes more officers arrived, so that in total there was about 10-15 Hungarian police officers, with some police dogs.

The people-on-the-move expressed their intention to seek asylum, and the officers replied that the border was closed and it was not possible to seek for asylum in Hungary. The officers didn't ask or write down anything or take any fingerprints from the people-on-the-move. The officers violently assaulted all of them. They released their dogs, and ordered them to attack the men for about 15-45 min. Afterwards the legs and hands of the men were full of bleeding wounds and scratches, and they were crying and shouting from pain. The interviewee got a 4 cm long wound on his right hand, so that he needed to consult a field doctor the next day for examination and treatment.

Afterwards, when the men tried to defend themselves, the officers started to kick them. The officers kicked the interviewee in the side of his chest. He had severe pain afterwards, and the chest pain continued so that he needed to consult a doctor again, and go to a hospital for examinations, xrays and treatment. He had some ribs broken and needed weeks to heal.

Next the officers searched the bodies and belongings of the people-on-the-move. They looked through their mobile phone files and wrote down the names of the owners and numbers of their sim cards. Then the officers either broke or threw away better phones (4 phones in total) and gave the worse ones back to the owners. They took shoes from some of the men, including the interviewee.

Once in a while some international police officers (more than 6, in police uniforms) visited the place. At this time the Hungarian officers would pause the violent treatment of the men. According to the interviewee's estimation, they were speaking German or Italian. These officers interrogated the men and ordered them to return back to Serbia, politely recommending them to go another way in the future. Some Hungarian army personnel were also present.

The Hungarian officials called for some officials in plain clothes to come and take pictures of each of the persons-on-the-move. In the end the police officials sprayed pepper spray into the eyes of the men, so that they felt irritation and couldn't see for a while.

After about 1-2 hours at this place, the police pushed-back the people, and they were transported directly to the border nearby. At the border, the police ordered the people to go back to Serbia, so the people returned to the Serbian side.

**24/06/2017**

## **“TWO OFFICERS IN POLICE UNIFORMS WERE CHOOSING PEOPLE AT RANDOM FOR BEATINGS”**

**Date and time:** June 24, 2017 22:30

**Location:** Between Subotica and Szeged, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.176502286842, 19.972801208496

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** unknown person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, pouring water over one's head, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, walking on people

**Police involved:** Officers in blue border police uniforms, army

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On June 24th, 2017, a group of people on the move crossed into Hungary at around 10:20-10:30pm. They were approximately 5km into Hungary, when they had to cross a road to continue into the forest. As they were crossing, they saw lights. They started running away, but were apprehended. The group of people sat down together in the forest. The interviewee describes that the apprehending officers were abusive and were using swear words towards them, such as "Kurvan" (Bitch).

The Officers took them from the forest to the field and ordered them to sit in a line with their knees up and their arms around them. The officers were yelling at them and saying things like: "Where you from? Who speaks English? Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria?" One person responded that he spoke some English, and that they were from Pakistan, and the interviewee states that in response the officers beat this person significantly. The officers released the dogs on him, 5-6 dogs, one without a muzzle and the rest with muzzles. The dog without the muzzle took the bag from the Interviewee and started to drag him. He released the bag and gave it to the dog, and the police officers proceeded to beat him with sticks and by kicking him.

The police officers that initially apprehended them were wearing blue border-police uniforms, afterwards about 10 more cars arrived, including what seemed to be army-officers. The interviewee describes that two officers in police uniforms were choosing people at random for beatings. Then, the officers ordered everyone to lay on their stomachs. First, they beat the first man in the line. The interviewee was chosen second.

*"They say, "Nationality", and first he use stick. Then, I say, "Pakistan" and they took me away separate and they released the dogs. Fikey and Taxi were their names, and they were beating me with sticks and kicks and punches. Then I was acting like I was in big pain, and they paused."*

At the same time, the officers were beating multiple other people from the group, with different kinds of sticks. The interviewee passed out from the beating, and the officers poured water on his face to wake him up, after which they kicked him again and ordered him back in the line with the others. While they were laying on their stomachs, the officers 'ran across them'. Every officer ran across them one at a time, and the interviewee describes that the officers were laughing during this. After 30 minutes, the officers told them to "wake up", and they took them to the road. They again made them lay on their stomachs by the side of the road. Then, they started checking their bags. The officers took one person at a time and when they finished checking their belongings, each person was told to lay back down in the line.

They stayed there for about 2 hours. While they were checking the belongings of the group of people, the officers broke their cell phones. Afterwards, they took them to a van. The group of people were transported 25-30 minutes in the van, and pushed-back. They held numbers with their ID cards, the interviewee held an ID from the Serbian camp, and the officers took 3 photos of him – from the side, face, and back.

The officers ordered one person to read aloud a paper, as speaking on behalf of the whole group, and they recorded the reading stating, "If you want to cross into Hungary, cross legally

through the transit zone” and referring to specific articles. The group of people then walked to the transit camp. Afterwards HCIT and UNHCR came to take photos of them, but the interviewee states that they did not ask them any questions about what had happened, but told that medical aid would arrive. The MDM and an ambulance arrived, but the interviewee experienced that they did not have the tablets and medical supplies that people needed.

**20/06/2017**

## “WE WERE CRYING FOR HELP, AND AT THIS TIME THE FAMILIES CAME OUT OF THEIR HOMES AND STARTED TO WATCH”

**Date and time:** June 20, 2017 23:30

**Location:** Ásotthalom, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.175830137593, 19.979756215234

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

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

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** Some wearing camouflage army uniforms, others dressed in blue police uniforms and civilian clothes

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On June 20th, 2017, a group of people on the move, including minors, crossed the border to Hungary. They crossed at 2 am and walked for about 30 minutes, before being apprehended by police in Ásotthalom.

The interviewee describes particularly one police officer wearing a green and brown camouflage army uniform, who beat them extensively.

*“First, he came and saw us, then he found a large stick from the forest like this [gestures approx. 5 cm diameter] and said, “Welcome.” He beat us for a half hour. At the beginning we were crying for help, and at this time the families came out of their homes [nearby] and started to watch. Some parents took their small children back inside their homes, but maybe 15-20 other people stood ~50m away and watched as we were beaten. Because it is a small village, everyone knows.”*

The interviewee describes another 3 additional police officers with dogs, and particularly one police officer in a blue uniform who participated in beating them. After about 5 minutes, 5

police cars came to the sight. The cars had people in both plain clothes and police uniforms. One police officer checked if people were bleeding. Then, he ordered a man in plain clothes to come with water to wash the blood from their faces.

3 people passed out from the beating. One 14 year old was covering himself with his backpack when the police officer in the green and brown army uniform was beating them. The police officer pulled his bag away, and swung his stick with both hands, like one would swing a baseball bat, hitting him hard in the face. After this, he passed out for some time. The interviewee describes how this boy, when he woke up, started to dance and sing and police told him to sit down and shut up, but he did not. The other people in the group also told him, but he kept singing and dancing and speaking in a non-existing/jibberish language. The interviewee clearly perceived the boy to be in a state of delirium after the beating and being passed out.

A second man, 27, also passed out from the beatings. He was passed out for a long time. When the man in the green and brown army uniform finished beating them, he rested against a tree. He told 2 people to move the man who was passed out to a different place. The man with the green and brown army uniform told the two police officers with the dogs to release them, but they refused because there was too much blood. Then, the police in plain clothes arrived and asked them for their mobiles and all their personal items. They took photos and returned the items.

They asked the group of people questions in English such as: "Where did you come to Hungary? At what time?" Afterwards they let them sleep for two hours, after which they were woken up and ordered into a van. The group of people were then driven for about 40 minutes to Horgos camp. There they waited for one hour, and officers took photos of everyone – from the front, from each side, and one from the back. Everyone had to hold up a number for the pictures.

The group was then pushed-back to Serbia. One Hungarian in police uniform and one Hungarian in an army uniform ordered them to read a statement, which ended with "If you wish to file a complaint about a specific officer, then you may do so now." The interviewee said that they wanted to file a complaint, but the officers just ordered them to go.

When the last person was pushed through the gate, the Hungarian officer in the army uniform hit him on the head with a torch, in front of the Serbian police.

13/06/2017

## “THE POLICE HAD PISTOLS AND THE ARMY HAD MACHINE GUNS, THEY HELD THE GUNS TO EACH OF OUR HEADS”

**Date and time:** June 13, 2017 01:00

**Location:** Near Ásotthalom 5 km behind the border, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.22972804692796, 19.708099365234375

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

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

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pouring water over one's head, threatening with guns, dog attacks, holding gun to one's head, pouring alcoholic drinks on people

**Police involved:** Police and army

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On June 13th, 2017 a group of people on the move walked approximately 5km into Hungary. They were sleeping in the forrest for approximately one hour to hide from the police, because they thought they were safe enough to sleep. Then they were surrounded by police, who started beating everyone. The police called the dogs, German shepherds, the dogs had muzzles on. The police continued beating, kicking, punching and hitting the group of people with sticks. With both police batons, sticks from the forest, and their torches.

*“There was one man who was very tall and looked like a bodybuilder, he had on a blue shirt and army trousers. They kicked us in the face and groin and said, “Welcome to Hungary.” Then, they put dirt into our faces and said again, “Welcome to Hungary.”*

After one and a half or two hours, the police ordered them to stand up and moved the group from the forrest. They told them to make a line, and continued beating them with batons and sticks on their legs. The interviewee describes that there was a car playing loud Hungarian music, and that the police officers poured beer and wine on the back of their necks. Then the group was told to sit down in the line outside the forest, and the police released a dog on them.

*“They kicked me in the face when I was sitting, and my nose started bleeding. Then, when the police saw my nose bleeding, he kicked me in the face again, and said, “Fuck you.” The police had pistols and the army had machine guns, they held the guns to each of our heads. Then, they told us to stand up and make a line, and start walking. As we were walking, they continued to beat us.”*

The interviewee describes that there was a specially trained police officer who was kicking and punching their faces and arms. They walked for one and a half hours, while still being beaten.

When they got to the main road, the police brought in two vans. The police took the group to the transit zone gate, and interviewed them one by one. They asked a series of questions such as: Where are you from? How old are you? What is your name? What is your mother's name? Where do you want to go?

Then the police instructed them to unlock their phones and they checked their phones. The police also went through their belongings and pockets. Then the Serbian police came to the fence, and the Hungarian police took the dog away. The Hungarians asked how much money each person had, and then gave the money back to them.

*"My nose continued bleeding for two hours, and when I arrived to the transit zone it was still bleeding."*

The police took around 5-6 minutes to check each person, and at around 5:30 or 6:00 am they opened the gate and led the group back to Serbia.

12/06/2017

## "WHEN HE WOKE UP, HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE WAS, HE WAS BLEEDING FROM HIS MOUTH AND VOMITING BLOOD"

**Date and time:** June 12, 2017 02:00

**Location:** Between Subotica and Szeged, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.174838150927, 19.975891113281

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

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

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, Forced into crouched down position with head to the ground for hours.

**Police involved:** Army and police involved

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On June 12th, 2017 a number of people on the move crossed the border to Hungary at around 11pm. At 2am they were caught. The interviewee states that they were first caught by people from the military, after which police officers arrived. The people from the military did not beat them so much, but afterwards the arriving police beat and kicked the group of people. They told them to crouch down into fetal position, with their heads to the ground, and beat them if

they moved. They stayed down like this for 2 hours, and they continuously beat them if they moved. After some time, new police officers arrived in a car and also partook in the beatings during these two hours. A second car with more police officers arrived and they beat them again for one more hour. Approximately three hours of beating, punching and kicking in total.

Afterwards, the police officers walked them to the main road and told us to sit down. They pointed their guns at them and told them to sit far apart from each other, then another car arrived and the police started beating them again. 5-6 additional cars arrived. The interviewee describes how they kicked one man in the crotch and he passed out due to the pain.

*“When he woke up, he didn't know where he was, and he was bleeding from his mouth and vomiting blood. Police say they recognized him, one army man say 4-5 days ago this man tried before. 4-5 police beat this man. He went back to Belgrade. The police beat another man, and kicked him in the chest till he was vomiting.”*

The police continued beating them on the side of the road, and afterwards many were almost unable to walk, because they were in the crouched position for such a long period of time. The police then took out a dog, and were holding it on the leash, and letting it bark at people, but not releasing it.

Two vans arrived to the side of the road, and brought the group of people to the Horgoš transit zone. There was a Serbian police officer at the gates, where they were sent through back to Serbia. A Hungarian officer collected their shoes, the interviewee asked for a minute to take off their shoes and as a response the officer pepper-sprayed their face.

There are two small gates close to the patrol road which go through the two fences to the Serbian side. It is around 500 meters from the container camp. They were forced to read aloud a paper before being sent through the gates. The paper stated, “Don't come again to Hungary illegally. If you want to come to Hungary, register in Serbia to cross. If you cross the border again, we will bring you to a closed camp or to court, and court will decide what to do.” There was furthermore a speaker on the fence announcing, “This is property of Hungary.” This announcement was played in English, Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu. The group of people were made to read aloud the paper while being recorded. The police further took pictures of everyone, as both a group photo and individual pictures from four angles, face, back, right and left sides.

The Serbian police standing close to the gate, then directed them to the camp. They told them to go get food and water there, and that they should leave the transit camp immediately after, but they let them rest there for a while.

**23/02/2017**

## **“THE WATER WAS COLD, AND THEY THREW US INSIDE”**

**Date and time:** February 23, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Kelebia, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.1958608, 19.606629099999964

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, water immersion, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 4 Police vans, helicopter

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

*This series of time-stamped posts are from interviews conducted on the 25th of February with various victims of Hungarian police brutality, during two separate crossing attempts on consecutive nights. They were interviewed and recorded on video by a journalist we have been collaborating with, Jaime Alekos, with the support of a translator who wishes to remain anonymous.*

Interviewee: 13 years old from Afghanistan [crossed into Hungary the night of 23 February, 2017]

00:00 – How many people were with you three nights ago and how many policemen arrested you?

00:03 – We were 15 people in our group, they caught us just when we were waiting for the [smuggler's] car. First, the helicopter came and then four vans of police came while we were sleeping at night.

00:22 – What was the first thing the police did when they saw you?

00:28 – When the police caught us, they sent us to the police station. Once there, they took off our clothes for checking, we were naked. They told us to dress again and they started beating us, too much. After that, they put us in cold water.

00:58 – How did they beat you? Did they use their hands, feet, batons?

01:02 – They kicked us, punched us and also beat us with batons.

01:08 – Did they only beat you and not the other people?

01:11 – They beat everyone.

01:13 – For how long did they beat you?

01:15 – They took to the doctor those who were more injured, to put bandages to stop the bleeding and then they took all of us in a van back to the fence, where they took our pictures and sent us back to Serbia through a gate in the fence.

01:33 – This beating was inside the police station?

01:35 – Yes, inside the police station.

01:38 – Do you know in which city or village?

01:41 – In Kelebia, in Kelebia.

01:42 – In Kelebia?

01:43 – Yes.

01:47 – How was the water?

01:50 – It was cold and they threw us inside.

01:53 – The water was standing? [not moving, not in a river]

01:55 – Yes.

01:58 – Were you dressed?

02:00 – Yes, they put us in the water with our clothes on.

02:02 – Was the water cold?

02:03 – Very cold.

02:06 – After that, you were soaked, did they take you like that inside the van?

02:10 – They took us soaked from the water, they put us inside of the police van and they told us not to sit on the seats, but on the ground. When we got to the border they took pictures of us and pushed us back to Serbia. We were wet and they didn't allow us to sit.

02:25 – They didn't allow you to dry your clothes?

02:26 – No, no.

02:27 – Were you soaked when they pushed you back to Serbia?

02:28 – Yes, they sent us back soaked.

02:28 – Did the police make you sign any document or make any statement?

02:34 – A translator came, he took a statement from us and asked us who is the leader. He asked me who is the leader and I answered I don't know. He told us: tell me, otherwise I'll put you in a room and throw the dogs inside. But I told him that I didn't know. Then he left me. He wrote down our names and then they put us inside the car and took us back to the border.

**22/02/2017**

**“THERE WERE AROUND 50 OR 60 POLICEMEN,  
COUNTLESS. THEY STARTED BEATING US, ALL OF  
THEM WERE BEATING US”**

**Date and time:** February 22, 2017 20:00

**Location:** Hungary, Serbian-Hungarian border near Subotica

**Coordinates:** 46.18090011791341, 19.68475341796875

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 70 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pouring water over one's head, walking on people, pouring alcohol on people, spitting on people

**Police involved:** 60+ police, soldiers and policemen with balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

*This series of time-stamped posts are from interviews conducted on the 25th of February with various victims of Hungarian police brutality, during two separate crossing attempts on consecutive nights. They were interviewed and recorded on video by a journalist we have been collaborating with, Jaime Alekos, with the support of a translator, who wishes to remain anonymous.*

Interviewee: 18 year old from Pakistan [crossed into Hungary the night of 22 February, 2017]

07:38 – How did you go from Belgrade to the border three days ago?

07:47 – When we left Belgrade we were 30 or 35 here. When we arrived to Subotica, there were more people there. In total, we were 70 or 75 people. We crossed the border and the police arrested us.

08:13 – What did the police say or did to you when they arrested you?

08:18 – When they surrounded us they told us to sit. We sat and they told us to put our head between our legs, looking to the floor. They started shouting who is the boss, who is the boss. Nobody answered. There were around 50 or 60 policemen, countless. After that, they started beating us, all of them were beating us, in a very bad way that is inexplicable, like doomsday.

08:50 – How were the policemen dressed, how did they look like?

08:53 – There were police, soldiers and policemen with balaclavas, but the soldiers were not beating us. Only the police were beating us, the soldiers were standing, they were looking. They did many things, they threw alcohol and water on us, they spit us in the face and beat us for three hours.

09:26 – How did the police beat you? With their hands, feet, batons? How many times? How strong?

09:33 – [After crossing the fence] we ran for 20 minutes, it was a long way, and it took us two hours to get back to the fence walking. They beat us the whole way. We were coming back very slowly and they were also stopping us in the way to beat us more. When one policemen got exhausted from beating, he left and another one would come. When the other one came, he would start beating us again.

10:05 – In which way did they beat you?

10:06 – We were fleeing from them from the beginning so they arrested us after that, that's why they beat us.

10:17 – Did they kick you?

10:18 – They kicked me, they used their fists, black batons.

10:28 – Did you see any policemen drinking alcohol?

10:31 – They were drunk, they had a big smell of drunk.

10:36 – In which parts of your body did they beat you?

10:38 – They beat me on my thighs, my back, my kidneys.

10:54 – Did they walk on you?

10:55 – Yes, on all of us.

10:57 – How many policemen walked on you and how many times did they do it?

11:01 – Three or four policemen were walking on us in opposite directions.

11:07 – How many times did they walk on you?

11:08 – One walked on me with one foot and the other one was coming from the opposite direction. They were also walking with both feet intentionally at the same time on me.

11:21 – How did they push you back to Serbia?

11:27 – When we got back to the fence they started searching us, they were looking for mobile phones, nothing else, and they suddenly broke the mobile phones of those who showed them. After they searched one man, they would put him in a separate group, lying with the face on the floor, with their backpack close to the head. When they finished searching, everyone was lying on the ground, then they opened the gate of the fence and pushed us back from there. We walked five minutes in Serbian soil and even in Serbian soil the Hungarian police came behind us, they ran behind us like from the beginning of this warehouse to the end.

12:19 – The Hungarian police got into Serbian soil, more or less, 100 meters?

12:26 – They chased us running like 120 or 150 meters, around 10 or 12 policemen.

12:39 – Did you try to cross into Hungary before? What happened three nights ago, is it a common practice?

12:49 – This was the first time I try to get into Hungary. I tried once to get into Croatia and the Croatian police also beat me, but not like the beating that the Hungarian police gave me this time.

**22/02/2017**

## **“THEY CROSSED THE BORDER, CAME INTO SERBIAN SOIL AND BEAT US AGAIN”**

**Date and time:** February 22, 2017 20:00

**Location:** Hungary, Serbian-Hungarian border near Horgos

**Coordinates:** 46.15822374811567, 19.900360107421875

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 70 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, pouring water over one's head, dog attacks, walking on people, pouring alcohol on people  
**Police involved:** 60+ police, soldiers and policemen with balaclavas  
**Taken to a police station?:** unknown  
**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**  
**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No  
**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

# “THEY CROSSED THE BORDER, CAME INTO SERBIAN SOIL AND BEAT US AGAIN”

*This series of time-stamped posts are from interviews conducted on the 25th of February with various victims of Hungarian police brutality, during two separate crossing attempts on consecutive nights. They were interviewed and recorded on video by a journalist we have been collaborating with, Jaime Alekos, with the support of a translator who wishes to remain anonymous.*

Interviewee: 20 years old from Pakistan [crossed into Hungary the night of 22 February, 2017]

13:02 – How many people were in your group the last time you tried to cross the border?

13:09 – We went from here to Subotica by train. We were about 70 people. From Subotica we took a bus to Horgos. From Horgos the border was one hour away. It was dark when we crossed into Hungary. We were running 20 or 25 minutes. Then the police caught us. And their behaviour with us was very cruel.

13:40 – Why do you say that they were drunk?

13:42 – They had alcohol in their hands, they threw alcohol at us and they were talking nonsense.

13:47 – When a lot of police arrived, what was the first thing they did to you?

13:50 – When they arrived, they were separating us from the group one by one, beating us one by one, and taking us to another place after the beating.

13:58 – Ten policemen were standing, and one boy was beaten by ten policemen and then they separated him from the group after the beating.

13:58 – There were policemen standing who would beat every man alone when they separated him from the group.

14:04 – How did they beat you? With their hands, feet, batons...?

14:07 – The first two policemen were kicking and punching us, the two policemen behind them would beat us with black batons and the rest of them were giving us a mixed beating.

14:17 – Apart from the beating, were they saying anything?

14:21 – Yes, they told us: you are “fucking terrorist”, they were using very rude words like “dirty-blood”.

14:30 – What did they do to you when they moved you to the other place?

14:38 – They made a line with us. We got there running through a shortcut in the forest, but it took us two hours to get back to the fence walking through the official road. And all the way back they were beating us.

15:02 – Before pushing you back to Serbia, everyone was lying on the ground, did they do that [spraying with tear gas] to you?

15:11 – They sprayed us all the way from the place where they arrested us to the fence. Even when we came into Serbian soil they were coming behind us and spraying us.

15:19 – What happened when you were lying on the ground?

15:22 – They walked on us and they released the dogs.

15:26 – How many policemen walked on your back?

15:29 – Around 40 policemen were walking on us, for 20 minutes.

15:37 – When did they throw alcohol on you?

15:45 – When they arrested us the first time. And also when we were coming back in the line [from the arresting point to the fence], they also threw alcohol on us.

15:51 – Did they also throw water on you?

15:54 – Water, alcohol and spray.

15:57 – Were you wet from alcohol and water when you were lying on the ground?

16:00 – Yes, completely soaked, and because of that we had things from the ground stuck on our bodies, we were full of dirt.

16:14 – How did they push you back into Serbia? Through a gate in the fence?

16:16 – Yes, they opened the door and they pushed us into Serbia. We were very tired and injured, so we wanted to have a rest in Serbian soil, but when we started to rest they came again.

16:24 – They crossed the border, came into Serbian soil and beat us again.

16:31 – Did Hungarian police beat you in Serbian soil?

16:33 – In Serbian soil. We told them Serbian police was coming to scare them, then they runned back.

16:42 – The boy you saw faint, did that happen when he was lying down?

16:45 – No, no, when we were coming in the line to the fence, some guys were fainting again and again. When they fell down, the police would beat them and walk on them, they threw water and alcohol on them and forced them to stand up in the line again.

16:52 – Did you see how the police beat people that were fainted on the ground?

16:56 – Yes, there was a man in front of me in the line, he blacked out and fell down, the police beat him and pulled him from his leg.

17:06 – Were they drinking alcohol when you were walking in the line?

17:08 – Yes, regularly.

17:11 – When they pushed you back to Serbia, did you see any helicopter?

17:13 – Yes, when we came back to Serbia, then a helicopter came.

17:21 – How did the Hungarian police beat you in Serbia?

17:25 – Yes, they were behind us and released the dogs, and those who were weak in our group, the last ones, they couldn't run and they beat them again.

17:34 – How did they beat you? With fists, feet, batons...?

17:38 – Fists, kicks and black batons.

17:41 – Were they drinking alcohol in Serbian soil?

17:46 – Yes, they had a bottle of wine, alcohol.

**22/02/2017**

## **“THEY GRABBED HIM AND SMASHED HIS HEAD AGAINST THE GROUND, BREAKING HIS TEETH”**

**Date and time:** February 22, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Hungary, border with Serbia near Bački Breg

**Coordinates:** 45.92563248555201, 18.953475952148438

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 45 person(s), age: unknown , from: unknown

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, smashing one's head against the ground

**Police involved:** 30-40 police officers, helicopter

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On February 22nd, 2017 a group of 42-45 people on the move crossed the Hungarian border from Serbia near Bački Breg. The group included three or four minors and five to ten elderly people. After midnight the fence was cut and the group got through. Just after moving through the fence they looked back and saw a police car behind them, the police saw that the fence had been cut. The group of 42-45 people walked for about an hour before getting to a main road. The group saw police cars on the other side of the road who were looking for them, there was also a helicopter. The group then hid in a field next to the road. The police looked for them for about 20-25 minutes, about 30-40 police officers. The group was spotted, as they were caught in the lights from the helicopter.

Five minutes later the police arrived and started screaming and shouting at the group of people who were all sitting, and proceeded to beat them with batons hitting every person numerous

times, and kicking them. The police kept hitting and kicking them for about 15–20 minutes. The interviewee describes that people were beaten so badly that they were crying very loudly, and that the police were both hitting at the group, but also individual beatings.

*“You would think that they wouldn’t hit the elderly and the minors, but they hit them just as much. They didn’t even bother to see who was older and who was younger; they just started hitting us right away.”*

One person was caught individually and not along with the group of 42–45 people, the police beat him individually for about half an hour while questioning him about where his group was. The police grabbed him and smashed his head against the ground, breaking his teeth. Blood was coming out of his ears and from his nose. His mouth was cut where the teeth had been broken. When the police dropped the group off in Serbia, this person was unable to move and the group carried him to the Horgoš transit zone.

The interviewee describes that the policemen were humiliating and laughing at the group while beating them, saying things like: *Muslims are animals*. The police ordered them into a line and made them sit down. The police asked each person where they were from while still hitting them.

*“Whenever they felt like it, they would hit you. If one of us was sitting in a different way than the others or if the line wasn’t straight, they would drag them out of the line and would beat them and push them back saying: Sit straight! In my whole life I’ve never been that scared. I’ve never been beaten this way and I’ve never seen anyone who was beaten this way.”*

The police then searched through their belongings, and made them undress while still beating them. The group of people were ordered back into a line and got their clothes back. The group was then ordered into a police van that brought them back across the border. The police ordered the group to stand in a line again and one of the police officers held a can of teargas up towards them, then a Serbian police car arrived, and the interviewee estimates that this caused the police officer not to use the teargas.

The police then ordered them to read a loud a paper stating something along the lines of: *We crossed the Hungarian border illegally. We know know that we can go legally through a transit zone, if we experienced any violence we can report it*. But without any information as to how or where one could do this. The police filmed them as they were reading. Afterwards the Group was deported and forced to the Serbian side of the border.

**21/01/2017**

## **“THEY MADE US TAKE OUR SHOES OFF AND STAND IN THE SNOW”**

**Date and time:** January 21, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Hungary, border with Serbia near Horgoš

**Coordinates:** 46.17093426840636, 19.90727341733873

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 14 person(s), age: unknown , from: unknown

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** Six or seven police cars, two dogs

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On January 21st, 2017, 40 people on the move crossed the Hungarian-Serbian border near Horgoš. Some of them ran through the border and ran away. Fourteen people, including the interviewee stayed behind and got caught by police. Six or seven police cars came with two or four police officers in each of them, they also had two dogs with them.

The first thing the police did was to spray the eyes of the 14 people with tear gas. They then made the interviewee and three other people take their shoes off and stand in the snow, while the police were hitting them with police batons and kicking them. The police officers were wearing dark blue uniforms, and the interviewee describes that two of them were dressed differently, wearing some form of military trousers.

*"They told us to put our hands up. When you put your hands down they hit you. We were standing in the snow, and they took our hats."*

The police then took the 14 people to a police van. There were 6 or 7 cars in total, but the police forced all the 14 people into one van. When they drove to the border, two other cars followed them. At the border, the police ordered them out of the van and made them form a line again. Then the police released dogs on them. The police took pictures and videos of the 14 people, and ordered them to read aloud a paper stating that they need to cross the border in a legal manner.

**16/01/2017**

**"THEY BEAT THE ELDERLY, THEY BEAT THE SMALL CHILDREN, THEY BEAT THE CHILDREN SO BAD THEY BEGAN CRYING."**

**Date and time:** January 16, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Hungary, border with Serbia near Bački Breg

**Coordinates:** 45.98677407067995, 18.965858998708427

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 35 person(s), age: unknown , from: unknown

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, dog attacks, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Around 40 police officers, helicopter

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On January 16th. 2017, 30-35 people on the move crossed the Hungarian border near Bački Breg, around midnight. The group of 30-35 people included 4-5 minors and 10-15 elderly people. They got through on their first try and kept on walking for about two hours. They were then spotted by a helicopter with flashing lights. About forty police officers arrived, the group of 30-35 people hid in an apple orchard between the trees, but the police found them.

*"They caught us. They didn't say anything, just started hitting us."*

The police did not ask any questions before they started beating them. They were beating the group of 30-35 people for about half an hour, both using batons and kicking them. The interviewee describes being kicked in the stomach. The police had three or four dogs that they were using to scare the group of 30-35 people, releasing the dogs on them and pulling them back. The police made them take off their clothes, and searched their pockets and their bags. The police threw out everything they found in the bags and kicked any person that tried to take their clothes back.

Then the police took them to the van and forced them in by kicking and hitting with batons on their shoulders and backs. They took them to the border and pulled them out of the van, while again hitting and slapping them. The police then ordered the 30-35 people to stand in a line at the border and took individual pictures of their faces. Four or five of them were ordered to read out a paper stating that they had entered the country illegally.

*"From the moment they caught us to the moment they deported us they were continuously beating us. They beat the elderly. They beat the small children. They beat the children so bad they began crying."*

The police then opened the gate and forced them out by pushing and grabbing people by the head. A Serbian police car arrived on the other side. The group of 30-35 people then went to the Horgoš camp.

*"Nobody asked us anything. Nobody asked if we were okay, if we were beaten. After this all our clothes were ripped and we slept outside. The next day we walked back to Subotica."*

15/01/2017

## “THEY BEAT HIM SO BADLY THAT THERE WAS BLOOD COMING OUT OF HIS EARS”

**Date and time:** January 15, 2017 00:00

**Location:** Kelebia, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.187743320189426, 19.581780000873886

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pepper spray, pouring water over one's head, dog attacks, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Three in army uniforms, about 10 in blue police uniforms

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On January 15th, 2017 the interviewee crossed the Hungarian border near the Kelebija crossing, in a group of thirty people. After they got through the fence they walked for about half a kilometer. They were caught and brought back to the border near Horgoš. They were transported in a green car. Three of the police officers were wearing full army uniforms, the rest were around ten police officers in blue uniforms, with few badges on them. The uniforms had some kind of marking on them, but the interviewee was not allowed to look up, and thus could not see the markings. There were four or five police cars, two or three small ones and a big van. The cars were white with some markings on them, as well as one dark van.

There was a mud track next to the border fence, the police made the group of 30 people sit in the mud track in a line. They had to put their hands on their necks and put their heads down. The police kept them in the mud from 1am to 3am, before pushing them across the border. The police were punching and kicking the group of 30 people. There was also a dog, the police took off its muzzle for five minutes and took it around, threatening the group of 30 people. The police did not release the dog completely, but they kept it on a short leash and took it close to the group of 30 people. Then the police put the muzzle back on, but the dog was still clawing at the group of people, including on their faces. The police then took one person out of the line and they took off all his clothes, leaving the person only with a t-shirt and trousers, and then proceeded to strip and search the 30 people, leaving everyone in one t-shirt and one pair of trousers.

Two police officers were looking through the phones from the group of 30 people. They found something on one person's phone and this person got beaten more excessively than the others.

*"They beat him so badly that there was blood coming out of his ears. I don't know what it was, what they found. He was a regular refugee, he wasn't anyone special. They broke everyone's phones, but more than anything they beat us."*

The police used police batons and their hands in beating the 30 people. There were four 15-year old Afghan boys in the group, they were treated the same way.

The interviewee describes the police officers as being drunk, and reports smelling alcohol from the police during searches.

The police destroyed the money they found on the 30 people, and threw away the food they found. The police took away one shoe from each person, and poured any water they found over the heads of the 30 people. It was minus 14 or 15 degrees on this night, and the interviewee describes it as extremely cold, and states that a lot of people got very sick afterwards. Later on the police gave them back one jacket each, after one person got really sick.

*"When we were in the line they made us look down, anyone who would look up would get beaten. The female police officers were hitting us with the batons on our private parts."*

The police ordered them to go back to the border, in groups of two. They made a video where they took their names, two and two. Then they sprayed them with tear gas and two police officers followed them on to the Serbian side. Initially the police didn't spray all of the 30 people, they only sprayed people who did or said something. Those people were not filmed, they were moved to the side as the police filmed everyone else. After the videos were taken, the police proceeded to spray all 30 people.

*"If anyone would try to touch their eyes, their hands would get smacked. You can't see anything for two or three hours. It's spicy. And there are tears and tears and tears. Your eyes get red. Your face gets swollen and red."*

**13/01/2017**

**"A 13-YEAR OLD BOY COULDN'T STOP CRYING BECAUSE OF THE GAS, THEY LAUGHED AT HIM AND WERE HITTING HIM WITH BATONS."**

**Date and time:** January 13, 2017 19:00

**Location:** Border near Horgos-Rozske, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.17664001458464, 19.97868455015123

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: unknown , from: unknown

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, pepper spray, water immersion, dog attacks, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12-14 police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Testimony 1:

On January 13th, 12 people on the move crossed the Hungarian border near the Horgoš crossing. Initially there were 55 people in the group, and all 55 people crossed the border on to the Hungarian side, after which they separated and 12 people, including the interviewee, were caught by the Hungarian police about two kilometers from the border fence. Four police officers approached them in a marked police car; they had two dogs with them.

First thing the police did was to spray their eyes with tear gas, so they couldn't see clearly. The interviewee states:

*I tried so hard to open my eyes and remember their faces or numbers on their uniforms but the gas made it impossible. I can only say that they were young men, age 20–22 and that their uniforms were blue. They asked about our nationality and started shouting: 'No Hungary for you', calling us terrorists, Taliban, etc.*

Two additional police cars arrived with eight police officers and four dogs. The police instructed the 12 people on the move to sit in a puddle, with water knee-deep. One of the 12, a 13-year old boy was crying because of the tear gas, the police moved him from the front to the back of the line, so he was sitting next to the interviewee. The 12 year old was crying and the police were laughing at him and hitting him with police batons while yelling at him to shut up. *The 12 year old boy was the youngest in the group of 12 people on the move, but there were three additional minors in the group also.*

The police ordered the group of 12 people to put their hands up and open their jackets, and proceeded to hit them on their ribs and stomachs. Some of the police officers used plastic batons and the rest was armed with metal batons. Afterwards the police searched the 12 people, one person at a time, while the rest remained sitting in the water. The police ordered each person to stand up so they could remove warm clothing, jackets, gloves, hats, trousers (if someone was wearing more than one pair). The police further destroyed the dinars they found and took any euros that were found in the pockets, and smashed all phones on the ground.

During the search the 12 people had to hold their arms up in the air in the strong, cold wind. After the search was done the 12 people were forced to remain sitting in the puddle of water, and were ordered to put their hands on the next person's shoulders, at which point the police started hitting them on their ribs with batons.

*"One of the policeman stood on top of my friend's shoulders and started laughing and jumping on him. Then they told us to stand up but keep the line and released the dogs on us from the right side."*

Some of the 12 people tried to move away from the dogs, but they were beaten again and forced back into the "line". The police then proceeded to call off the dogs, but ordered the 12 people to remain in line.

*"The police went behind us so we couldn't see them and started tapping us on the shoulders. Anytime one of us turned around to look at them, the policeman would say: Hello! and spray gas in our eyes again. They didn't let us clean our faces, saying that they should stay that way."*

Afterwards the 12 people were taken to a police van, and the police were hitting their calves with batons as they were walking. The police didn't let them enter the part of the van meant for transporting people. Instead, the 12 people were forced into the luggage space, while the police were hitting and pushing them into this small space.

The police then took the backpacks from the people, threw away all water and food they found, and proceeded to throw the hard fruits such as apples and oranges in the faces of the 12 people. The 12 people were then transported to the gate. As there was not enough space to sit, they had to stand for the duration of the transport to the gate. Another Hungarian police officer, in what was described as a differently-looking military uniform, arrived with keys to open the gate. This newly arrived police officer approached the group of 12 people, took out his can of tear gas and sprayed their faces once again. The police proceeded to take pictures of them, ordering them to open their eyes, which was impossible for most as a result of the tear gas attack. When they were unable to open their eyes, the police started hitting them again, forcing them to look into the camera. Then they brought them to the fence and forced them to read aloud a sign posted on the border fence, saying that they hadn't experienced any physical or verbal abuse from Hungarian authorities.

*"Anytime one of us turned around to look at them, the policeman would say: Hello! and spray gas in our eyes again. They didn't let us clean our faces, saying that they should stay that way."*

The police recorded each person reading the sign out loud, as they were reading out the sign the dogs were released on them again, circling around their legs, below the point where the camera could see them. Then they let them through the fence and ordered them to go back to Serbia. There were no Serbian police on the other side.

The episode lasted around two hours, the 12 people were caught at 7pm and reached the gas station in Horgoš at 9:30pm.

#### Testimony 2:

The interviewee crossed the Hungarian border with forty other people. The interviewee do not remember the name of the place or the date. Behind the border fence the group of people on the move started walking very fast for about five minutes. The interviewee and eleven others sat down, while the remaining twenty-eight walked ahead. Between twelve and fourteen police

officers arrived; some in a car, some by walking. They had torches and were looking for the group of people. The group of 12 people stood up and the police came towards them, the police officers started kicking them and hitting them on the ribs with heavy and hard, black batons.

Then the police ordered the group of 12 people to walk away from the dry ground they were sitting on before, and forced them to sit in a big puddle of water, about two inches deep. They told them to put their hands up in the air and came running towards them, hitting their heads with batons. The police then made them take off their hats and gloves.

*"When my hands got cold I tried to put them in my pockets but they didn't let me. They were shouting: Take your hands out! and made me unzip my jacket. They emptied our pockets and destroyed our phones by smashing them on the ground with their heels."*

The police then proceeded with hitting the group of 12 people with batons. The interviewee was hit twice in the back, twice in the head and once on their fingers.

*We were still sitting down in the water when they came behind each of us saying: Hello my friend. When we turned to look at them, we were sprayed in the eyes.*

One police officer let the dogs loose on the group of 12 people, and had the dogs climbing and clawing on them.

*"When they sprayed me my head went down. Every time I tried to look at them they would hit me in the head. They made us look down like this [lowers his head]. They said we must stay like this. They said: Don't look up! They were hitting us very hard."*

The group of 12 people were forced to sit in the water for about one and a half hours. Afterwards they were forced into the back of a police van, into a small area of the van separated with a net, with the police dogs on the other side of the net. The police used batons to force the group into the small space in the van, one person from the group stood outside unable to get in because the space was too small, the police forced him in inside by pushing and hitting him. The police then closed the door and drove them to the border gate.

When the group of people got out of the car, the police made them stand in a line again. A new police officer arrived and started spraying them, this police officer is described as wearing a different army-type of uniform, with something black and white on it, while the remaining police officers had dark blue uniforms. The spray used by the newly arrived officer is described by the interviewee as different from the one used on them earlier.

*"It made my eyes hurt. The first one they had used made me cough and want to vomit. I was coughing a lot. I was in the front of the line when they started spraying us."*

The police asked why they tried to cross the border, and then made a video of the interviewee, who was told to read aloud a statement that was on a hook on the border gate, while the police were filming. After everyone had read the statement the police opened the gate, and the group walked back and arrived at the gas station around 21:30.

05/01/2017

**“WHEN HE STARTED CRYING AND BEGGING FOR MERCY, THE OFFICER PUT HIS GUN AWAY, THE OTHER POLICEMEN HELD HIM DOWN AND KICKED HIM.”**

**Date and time:** January 5, 2017 23:00

**Location:** Border near Roszke - Horgos, Hungary

**Coordinates:** 46.24998198529862, 19.924416127614677

**Pushback from:** Hungary

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 39 person(s), age: unknown , from:

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, pouring water over one's head, dog attacks, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Around fifteen policemen with trained dogs, heat-sensors and handguns

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Fresh Response

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On January 5th, 2017 at night forty eight people on the move, attempted to cross the Hungarian border near the Horgoš crossing. Forty-eight people started out, but 9 but got scared just before the border fence and decided to go back. The remaining 39 managed to cross the border onto the Hungarian side.

The interviewees were walking through the forest about fifteen kilometers north of the border (the location marked on the map) when they heard cars coming and decided to hide. Four marked police cars arrived. There were around fifteen policemen with trained dogs, heat-sensors and handguns. They saw the people on the move in the light, rounded them up and released dogs on them.

Then, without asking any questions, the police officers started kicking and beating the group of people on the move. Afterwards they searched them, checking pockets and backpacks, destroying money and smartphones. Money was shredded and smartphones smashed on the ground. Policemen took out batteries and SIM cards from each phone and destroyed them separately.

The police proceeded to confiscate all the warm clothing: jackets, gloves, hats, scarves, shoes and socks, leaving the 39 people on the move only in light jumpers and trousers. Every person who wore more than one pair of trousers was told to take them off.

Meanwhile, one more police car came. Newly arrived officers joined the rest. The police then hit one person with a stick, severely cutting his head. Afterwards they ordered everyone to sit in a line, with their legs spread, hands on their knees and bowed heads, and started pouring the water they had found in the bags over the the heads and clothes of the group of people on the move.

After that the police officers ordered one man to stand up with his hands behind his back. One of the police officers grabbed him by his collar, threw him on the ground and put a gun against his head.

*“When he started crying and begging for mercy, the officer put his gun away while the other policeman put his leg on the man’s neck and held him down so others could kick him.”*

The police then proceeded to once again release the dogs on the group of 39 people on the move. When they tried to back off to escape the dogs, police officers kicked them back towards the dogs. This was repeated several times. In the meantime, further police officers were drinking tea in the car observing and laughing.

Afterwards the police they put the group of 39 people in police cars and drove them back to the Serbian border. They set the air-conditioning to maximum in order to lower the temperature. They were brought back to the border where they were forced to read aloud a statement showed to them on a piece of paper, written in Urdu, Pashto and Farsi, stating that they crossed the border illegally and that they didn’t experience any verbal or physical violence from the Hungarian side. Those who didn’t read loud enough were yelled at and threatened. The Police recorded the reading of the statements.

Afterwards, at around eight in the morning, the 39 people were passed over to the Serbian side. The Serbians received them and ordered them to go towards Horgoš, but as they knew there’s no shelter in Horgoš except for the unofficial camp in the transit zone, they decided to walk the more than twenty kilometers to get back to Subotica.

*“Only some of us got their wet shoes or socks back so we took off some of the remaining clothes we had and wrapped them around our feet. The temperature was down to -7 degrees at the time and it was snowing.”*

# BALKANS



Across the borders in the Balkans which are otherwise not covered in this report, pushbacks are also a consistent feature of border management. The Border Violence Monitoring Network has collected testimonies of pushbacks perpetrated by authorities from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Romania, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. In addition, media coverage and civil society groups report the existence of routine and regular returns across Bulgarian borders [1] as well.

The trends and tactics described in these testimonies bear a striking resemblance to those described elsewhere in this report. The hallmarks of this violence include the theft or destruction of property which is seen across 75% of all testimonies collected by BVMN, or the use of physical violence: often in the form of blunt force trauma from batons. This type of bodily harm has been reported in 72% of all testimonies within the last two years. It is not uncommon that pushback groups are subject to additional, more extreme types of violence and torture such as punitive forced undressing and threats with firearms during arbitrary detention and expulsion under the cover of darkness.

It is important to understand that there is a conspicuous level of EU funding and support in the border policing of these countries. While Romania and Bulgaria are part of the EU, the rest of these countries are prospective members whose accession bids have become increasingly contingent on their role in the deterrence, detention and expulsion of POM. Countries such as Serbia have been under pressure to align their border practices with those of the European Union, seen explicitly in recent reforms made to the asylum law in order to sit in line with EU directives [2]. These changes mobilise non-Member States in the Balkans to act within an overarching strategy of border externalisation.

A key facet in this trend is the new role of the European Border and Coastguard Agency (EBCGA). Frontex, in particular, has expanded their presence heavily in the Balkans in the last two years. The agency now has active missions in Albania and Montenegro and has signed multiple status agreements with other countries such as Bosnia, Serbia and North Macedonia [3]. For the first time officials of the agency are acting in formalised missions on non-EU soil, and have a disturbing license to carry out border violations because of their immunity from the domestic court in their host country. This lack of accountability speaks to the advanced steps taken by EU border authorities in particular to engineer voids in which severe violations against POM can be performed and sustained.



Photo: Fractured right arm, North Macedonia to Greece, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-22-2020-0200-gevgelia/>

Photo: Dog bite on leg, North Macedonia to Greece, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/september-26-2019-0000-nearby-gevgelija-train-statio>



Serbia and Bosnia are tasked with hosting thousands of migrants who are attempting to enter the EU through Croatia, Hungary or Romania. But while acting as a transit and host country, these states are also involved in perpetrating chain pushbacks. This creates a reverse migration route, sending POM back and forth several times before they manage to enter the EU. While before, pushbacks constituted the removal of people across one border to a neighbouring country, now the destabilization of conditions and proliferation of multiple sequential pushbacks means a further weaponization of geography. In the most extreme cases, people pushed back from Croatia or Hungary would end up being chain-refouled all the way to Greece.

*Written by Jack Sapoch (NNK)  
and Milena Zajović (AYS)*

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**1 Nordic Monitor. (2019).** PACE slams Greece, Bulgaria for pushback of migrants to Turkey. Available: <https://www.nordicmonitor.com/2019/06/the-council-of-europe-body-slams-greece-bulgaria-for-pushbacks-to-turkey/> [Accessed 28/11/2020].

**2 Council of Europe. (2020).** Border Management: EU concludes agreements with Montenegro and Serbia on Frontex Cooperation. Available: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/05/26/border-management-eu-concludes-agreements-with-montenegro-and-serbia-on-frontex-cooperation/#> [Accessed 03/12/2020].

**3 FRONTEx. (2020).** Non-EU Countries. Available: <https://frontex.europa.eu/partners/non-eu-countries/> [Accessed 03/12/2020]

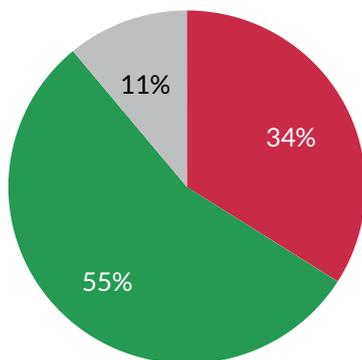
# STATISTICS

## Testimonies of pushbacks in the Balkans

Year	Number of testimonies	Affected persons
<b>Overall</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>950</b>
2017	0	0
2018	0	0
2019	30	275
2020	47	684

### Pushbacks involving minors in the Balkans

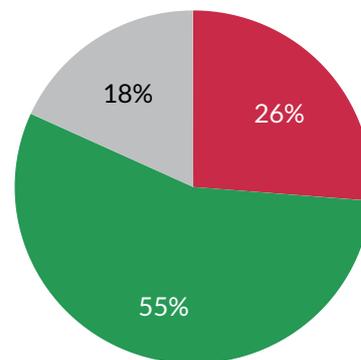
Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old



■ Yes (34%)
 ■ No (55%)
 ■ Unknown (11%)

### Intention to ask for asylum in the Balkans

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection.



■ Yes (26.26%)
 ■ No (55.56%)
 ■ Unknown (18.18%)

24/10/2020

## “THEY TOOK US TO THE BORDER, THEY OPENED THE DOOR AND PUSHED US BACK TO THE GREEK SIDE”

**Date and time:** October 24, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Idomeni, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.128333, 22.516944

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 42 person(s), age: 24-28 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Somalia , Libya

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** gunshots

**Police involved:** 6 Macedonian police officers in blue uniforms, 1 police car, 1 police van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 23rd of October 2020, the respondent, a 24-year-old Libyan man crossed the border to North Macedonia from Greece, along with three friends of similar age from Iran and Morocco.

A day later, on the 24th of October, the respondent and his friends reached the village of Marvintsi, south of north Macedonia (28 km away from the Greek border). There, local residents gave them food and water and advised them to leave the village as “*there were a lot of police around.*”

Just outside of Marvintsi, the respondent and his three friends were walking on the side of a road when they were approached by two North Macedonian police officers, one male, one female. The officers pulled over in a blue and white patrol car.

The male officer then fired a shot in the air after which the respondent and his friends ran away into the woods to hide, the respondent reports.

*“He shot by his pistol to make us afraid first”*

An hour later at 9:30 pm, they were found in the woods by the same two police officers from the road, along with four other police officers. The six officers (two women and four men) were wearing blue police uniforms and spoke Macedonian. The respondent described them as “huge people.” He could not give more details about them as he was told to look down.

*“You have to look down and if you look at them maybe they will hit you”*

The police officers came in a police car and called a police van in which the respondent and his friends were transported to the border. The van was blue and had a big cell inside as the

respondent called to mind. He stated that there were no windows in the back and the front window was broken. When they got inside the van, they found three more people-one-the-move inside, two men from Algeria and one man from Afghanistan.

They drove for approximately 15 minutes when the van stopped at the North Macedonian-Greek border barrier close to the Greek village Idomeni. In late 2015, the border began to be sealed off with a two-rowed barbed wire fence. This has now turned into a complete blockage of North Macedonian's southern border.

There, the police opened a "door" of the border fence and "pushed us back to the Greek side," the respondent asserted.

On the Greek side, the respondent and his group found train tracks close to the border. As a result, he could determine the exact location of the pushback. This is indicated below.

On his return journey, the respondent saw approximately 35 people-on-the-move from Somalia, Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. He recalled that there were three women with their husbands and the others were single adult men.

At the train tracks, the respondent recollected seeing a group of soldiers in army uniforms from far away. One female soldier had a dog on a leash. He and his companions altered their course to avoid being seen by them.

The respondent along with his three friends then took a train to Thessaloniki.

**20/10/2020**

## **"THEY TOLD US TO LEAVE VAN ONE BY ONE AND ALL OF THEM TOGETHER BEAT US"**

**Date and time:** October 20, 2020 22:00

**Location:** Miratovec, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 42.251210832724, 21.671932948033

**Pushback from:** Serbia

**Pushback to:** North Macedonia

**Demographics:** 3 and 5 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground

**Police involved:** 10 to 12 serbian police officers wearing light blue uniforms, 2 police van, 6 serbian army officers, 1 blue van; 7 to 8 serbian police officers wearing light blue uniforms, 4 serbian army officers, 1 van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent experienced physical violence and was pushed back from Serbia to Northern Macedonia two days in a row.

First incident happened on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October. According to the respondent, the Serbian authorities stopped the three people on the move at the train station, near to Preševo camp. Reportedly, there were 10 to 12 Serbian police officers wearing light blue uniforms with two police vans. One police officer was physically violent towards the people-on-the-move during which time the group was placed in the police van and driven for about 20 minutes further along the border. Then they stopped and what the respondent described as 6 Serbian "army officers" arrived with a blue van. They were made to switch cars and Serbian "army" drove them for about 15 minutes to the fields near the Northern Macedonian border. These officers reportedly were physically violent with the group before telling them to run to the border.

The second incident happened the following day, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October. They were a group of 5 people at this point. A group of approximately 7 Serbian police stopped them in front of Preševo camp. They again took them into a police van and drove them for about 20 minutes, then they stopped, and what the respondent again described as 4 Serbian "army officers" took the group into another van. The Serbian "army" again drove them again for around 15 minutes to the fields near the Northern Macedonian border. They ordered each individual separately to leave the van, after they beat them outside – all the "army officers" together. After the beating they ordered them to go back in the van and wait there. They repeated this with all 5 people. After they beat all the people-on-the-move, they told them to run to Northern Macedonian border. The "army" had a dog that was chasing after the group while they were running towards the border.

**15/09/2020**

## "HE KEPT BEATING WITHOUT LOOKING WHERE THE CABLE WAS FALLING, SO MOST PEOPLE GOT HIT ON THEIR HEAD"

**Date and time:** September 15, 2020 02:00

**Location:** Near the city Vălcani

**Coordinates:** 45.97736080988, 20.440596666992

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 20-30, from: Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** 6 Romanian border officers (5 wearing black T-Shirts, grey trousers, 1 wearing camouflage pants and a black vest), 3 police cars

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:****Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No**Reported by:** Collective Aid**ORIGINAL REPORT**

At 02:00 on 15th September 2020, a group of ten men and two women were violently pushed back from Romania to Serbia. Everyone in the group was from Syria, between the ages of 20-30.

The group entered Romania from the vicinity of Mokrin, in the North of Serbia. After walking 4-5km into Romania, the group was stopped by three police cars, each with two Romanian police officers (male) in them. The transit group sat down on the ground next to the road. Despite cooperating, one of the officers, who was described as wearing camouflage pants and a black vest, started beating them with a wooden baton with a cable attached. The primary respondent described that the beating was heavy and included frequent hitting on the head.

“He kept beating without looking where the cable was falling, so most people got hit on their head”

After this first incident, the six Romanian officers told the group to move onto the road and stand between two cars in a row, two by two. Many could not follow the instructions communicated in English because they could not understand. In response, the officers continuously hit them with the baton.

Afterwards the Romanian officers walked the group back to the Serbian border, handing them over to Serbian border guards. The Serbian guards gave the transit group instructions on how to walk back to Mokrin. The Serbian border guards did not show any violence towards the group.

**08/09/2020****“HOPEFULLY THE SITUATION WILL CHANGE”****Date and time:** September 8, 2020 01:00**Location:** North of Gevgelija, North Macedonia**Coordinates:** 41.39264, 22.31496**Pushback from:** North Macedonia**Pushback to:** Greece**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 23, 27 years old, unknown years old , from: Algeria**Minors involved?** No**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground**Police involved:** 6 North Macedonian police officers, unmarked white car, unmarked van**Taken to a police station?:** no**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:****Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** Yes**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team, Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 8th of September 2020, the respondents, one 27-year-old man and one 23-year-old man from Algeria, were apprehended near the train station of a small village in N. Macedonia, North of Gevgelija, on a road approximately 35 kilometres from the Greek-Macedonian border. The respondents could not recall the name of the village, however, one identified the location of their apprehension on a map (pictured below):

They were part of a group of four Algerians, no minors were involved. On their journey, one respondent claimed to have seen five green Land Rovers with German registration plates parked next to a concealed building resembling a police station in the woods. This observation was made two days before the pushback occurred.

In the late evening of 8th September, approximately between 21:30 and 01:00 the following day, the interviewees saw two policemen approach them by car, reportedly a white Skoda with a North Macedonian registration plate. After attempting to escape by crossing a nearby river, the group was caught by the officers. The officers called them over, stating they would not be harmed. But when closer, the police began seized and attacked the men.

*“[We] fell down in the river and they told [us]: you have to come here, we won’t beat you [...]. But when they caught [us], they beat [us] a lot”*

The four men were pushed to the ground and bound together in pairs with plastic zip ties on their wrists, before being beaten with wooden and metal sticks, for a couple of minutes. At least one of them was kicked in the chest by a policeman. Both interviewees were left with extensive bruising and swelling on their arms, legs, and torsos.

Before the assault, the respondents expressed their intention to apply for asylum to the police. Reportedly, one policeman promised to abide by this request, telling the group they would be brought to a camp and receive official transit papers.

*“[They said] We will bring you to a camp here, you will stay two days and they will let you free and you can do what you want. [...] They were lying to us”*

The group was made to sit and wait on the ground for 45 minutes and then a further four policemen arrived, all of whom were local Macedonian police. These new officers proceeded to beat the group again.

The four Algerians were then put inside a Mercedes van. After a drive of 30 to 45 minutes, the police brought the men back to the Greek border. They were forced out of the van and beaten with batons and metal sticks for a third time, before being pushed through a gated in the border fence close to Gevgelija. On the Greek side, the group was forced to sleep a night in the open. The respondents had wet clothing from the capture by the river and said that they suffered in the cold of the night. The following day, the four men took a train south to Thessaloniki.

05/09/2020

## “PUSHED BACK FROM AUSTRIA”

**Date and time:** September 5, 2020 19:30

**Location:** near Laafeld, Austria

**Coordinates:** 46.68668, 16.0051199

**Pushback from:** Austria

**Pushback to:** Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 27-40 , from: Syria, Morocco, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 4 Austrian civil police, 1 Austrian "military" police, unspecified amount of Slovenian civil police, 5 Croatian civil police during transport from Slovenia and to Bosnia, unspecified amount of Croatian officers at police station

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the evening of September 5, 2020, a group of five men were detained in the village of Laafeld, Austria and subsequently pushed back through Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia. The countries of origin of the respondents were Syria, Tunisia, and Morocco, ranging in ages from ages 27-40.

The group had departed Bosnia ten days previously, first transiting through Croatia and Slovenia before reaching Austria. They crossed the border from Slovenia into Austria on the evening of September 5, and continued walking through the forest in the border village of Laafeld. At 7:30 PM, they were approached by five Austrian police officers, one of whom they said was wearing the dress of the military, the rest wearing regular Austrian police uniforms. They believed that a nearby farmer in the rural area had observed them walking through the forest and called the authorities. When they approached the group, the police asked them to stop and sit down with their hands up. They asked the group where they were from, their names, and their ages, and shortly after they loaded them into a police van with the blue and red Austrian police insignia on its sides and drove them to a Austrian police station.

Instead of taking them to a nearby police station, the respondents reported that they drove west along the border to a station a few hours away. They could not give a precise location, but thought that it was a station on the Austrian-Slovenian border, near to the Slovenian city of Maribor. They thought that it was close to Maribor because when they were later transported to a Slovenian police station, they noticed signs for Maribor not long after departing from Austria. It is possible they were detained in the Halbenrain, Mureck, or Straß in Steiermark stations.

When they arrived at the police station several hours later, they were fingerprinted and photographed, as well as asked to sign several documents in which no translation was provided. The Austrian police officers at the station inquired as to why they had been apprehended by the police and what their intentions behind being in Austria were, and then ordered the group to undress to their underwear and subsequently frisked them as well as searched their clothes. However, they did not forcibly take their mobile phones nor the rest of their possessions.

At around 6 AM the following day, they were transferred to the Slovenian authorities who drove them in a van that the respondents described as not having windows and being very hot. Upon arrival at the police station, believed by the respondents to be in the town of Ptuj, the group was again fingerprinted, photographed, and made to sign documents without a translator. An unspecified number of officers also told them that it was necessary for them to pay five hundred euros at the station, claiming that it was the "law" for migrants and required for their registration and further transit to Croatia and Bosnia. However, they did not report actually paying this fee in the end. They were also made to undress to their underwear and were searched at the Slovenian police station, though again, they returned their mobile phones and the rest of their possessions before they went to Croatia. At one point, the officers gave them sardines and bread.

After several hours in the Slovenian police station, two Slovenian officers drove them two hours to the Slovenian-Croatian border, where they waited to be transferred to the Croatian authorities. After an hour, three Croatian officers in blue uniforms arrived in one Croatian van. Instead of being taken to a border station, the group thought the authorities transported them to a regular police station in Zagreb. The group was also fingerprinted and photographed at the police station; they were not given food, water, or access to a toilet in Croatia. They stayed in the Zagreb police station for three or four hours.

Eight Croatian police officers drove the group to the Bosnian-Croatian border in the late afternoon, in a car that they said had no windows and was very hot. They arrived at a stretch of the border near to Buzim four hours later, and then made their way to Glinica, where they remained for the following weeks.

The group reported asking for asylum in every country that they were detained in—including Austria—but were denied further procedure each time.

**04/09/2020**

**“WHEN YOU TRY TO LOOK AT THEM, THEY PUT YOUR HEAD TO THE FLOOR”**

**Date and time:** September 4, 2020 13:00

**Location:** Gevgelija, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.130431516513, 22.553443907818

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 30 , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, pepper spray

**Police involved:** 8 police officers (Czech and EU insignia), 1 police van and 4 Macedonian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, denial of medical assistance

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a 30-year-old man from Morocco. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, he and his friend (another Moroccan man aged 28) attempted to cross the Greek-Macedonian border, near Gevgelija.

Shortly after entering Macedonia, the respondent was detained by eight policemen “near the railway tracks” at 1:00pm. They arrived in vehicles described by the respondent as “blue police cars.” The second man fled; his whereabouts are still unknown.

“Maybe they saw us before we were crossing the border. As soon as we crossed the border, they came directly by car and arrested us.”

According to the respondent, the officers were wearing dark blue police uniforms that had Czech and EU insignia. All of them were wearing Balaclavas and many were armed with guns. The respondent believes were Frontex.

“When you try to look at them, they put your head to the floor,” he commented.

The respondent was pushed to the ground and beaten by four of the alleged-Frontex officers with fists and batons, which he claims were made of metal. He sustained extensive bruising on his arms, knees and his arm was broken.

The respondent was then placed inside a blue, windowless van and driven to a police station. The journey lasted five minutes. Given this travel time and the site of respondent’s apprehension, he was presumably taken to Gevgelija Border Police Station.

Upon his arrival, the respondent was transferred to the local Macedonian police. Inside the building, the officers did not take his name or fingerprints. The respondent was taken to a separate room and told to sit down on the floor. He was alone. Despite his injuries, the respondent was beaten for a second time by four Macedonian policemen in blue uniforms. He described this violence as “too painful” and reported that the officers “broke his hand.”

His subsequent requests for medical assistance were ignored.

After the assault, the respondent remained inside the room for ten minutes. He was then loaded into a police van by the same officers from the station and brought directly to the Greek-Macedonian border. This journey lasted 5 minutes.

The officers opened the door of the vehicle, pepper sprayed the respondent in the face and pushed him back across the Greek-Macedonia border. The respondent could not verify the

location precisely, however he stated that it was “by a big road” close to the Evzoni Border Station.

With a broken arm and hand, the respondent walked for two days back to Thessaloniki.

**29/08/2020**

## “PUSHED BACK TO GREECE FOR THE 18TH TIME”

**Date and time:** August 29, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Devoll District, Greece

**Coordinates:** 40.581873697851, 21.04395976098

**Pushback from:** Albania

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 23-25 , from: Afghanistan, Morocco

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 1 police woman in civilian clothes, 1 police man with Hungarian and European flag on the uniform, 3 Albanian police officers, rest unknown. One black van with a hungarian license plate but no signs on it, one van with Police sign on it

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The primary respondent for this report, a 25-year-old man from Morocco, was apprehended together with a group of three other men from Morocco (who are between the age of 23 and 25, while walking close to the Libonik road in the Albanian village called Maliq, which is located close to the city of Bulgarec and approximately 60 kilometres away from the Albanian/Greek border (approximate coordinates: **40°42'14.1"N 20°42'53.7"E**).

On Friday, the 28th of August 2020, the authorities arrived by car and arrested them. The black range rover in which the police arrived had an Hungarian license plate, and had not any signs or colors on it. There were four police men and one police woman, the latter being dressed in civilian clothes and one man wearing black clothes with the Hungarian flag on it, as well as ‘the flag from the European Union, blue with stars’. He identified another one as coming from the Albanian police. The respondent was not able to recognize the other police men because he and the others were told by the police to look down. The respondent stated that the police and Frontex at the Albanian border have always treated him well, and that they told him and the others to not be afraid of them. They brought them to a nearby police station in Maliq, Albania with the van.

Subsequently the police brought the respondent and the three other men to a camp which was located close to the border. They were sleeping there for one night, receiving dinner, breakfast, water and had access to the toilets there. At the camp were many other people,

families, men, women, children, and older people. The families were kept separate from the rest of the people in the camp.

The next morning, Saturday the 29th of August 2020, 3 Albanian police officers brought with a LandRover van, which had a police sign on it, several groups of 8 persons to a police station and afterwards to the Albanian border. The respondent, the other three Moroccan men, as well as three men from Afghanistan and 2 persons, of whom the respondent did not know their nationality, were brought together to the police station where they were waiting for about 25 minutes before being brought to the border. The different groups of 8 persons were not brought to the same location at the border crossing. The respondent described again that the Albanian police treated them 'good'. Once they reached the border, the police let them out of the van in a mountain region and showed them how to cross the border back into Greece.

The respondent and the other men arrived in Greece in a city named Kastoria. Because they had no money or food and wanted to return back to Thessaloniki, they asked the Greek police there for help. The police started to insult and beat them immediately, which is why the group ran away and walked about 30 kilometres from Kastoria to Neapoli Kozanis.

When the group arrived in Neapoli Kozanis, they found a party where they asked some people for help. They collected some money for the 8 men and helped them. The next day the men bought a ticket for the train to come back to Thessaloniki.

**21/08/2020**

## **“HE SAID: I WAS CRYING AND I CAN’T BREATH.”**

**Date and time:** August 21, 2020 02:00

**Location:** on the North Macedonian - Greek border close to Gevgelija

**Coordinates:** 41.12986907136511, 22.53555516252162

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 16-24 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pepper spray

**Police involved:** 4 North Macedonian policemen

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On the evening of the 21st of August, a small group of persons from Algeria and Morocco (aged 16-24) entered into North Macedonia on foot from Greece near the border city of Idomenia. The group entered into the country with the intention of continuing on their journey towards Serbia. Only a short time after crossing the border however, around a kilometer, the group was

approached and apprehended by four male North Macedonian police officers. The respondent described that it was around 2:00 am when they were first apprehended.

According to the respondent, the officers were physically violent towards him and his fellow group-members. Reportedly, the officers sprayed all of them in the eyes with a chemical agent, likely pepper spray, and struck them once with batons. After this initial exchange, the authorities did not ask any administrative or personal information from the group-members, and instead began an immediate and informal push-back of the group.

Under the threat of force, the officers led the group for around ten minutes back towards the border from which they had come from. When they reached the border, the officers ordered the group to walk back into Greece, which they did without further incident.

After returning over to the Greek side of the border, the group collected themselves before deciding to return to the Greek city of Thessaloniki.

**20/08/2020**

**“HE SAID LIKE, THERE IS TWO FLAGS EVERY, EVERY CLOTHES SO, THERE IS THE FLAG FROM THE EU, LIKE BLUE AND WITH STARS.”**

**Date and time:** August 20, 2020 10:00

**Location:** 15 minutes north of the North Macedonian border near Gevgelija

**Coordinates:** 41.12889932256976, 22.52189101762694

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 16-24 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 3 Frontex officers (Czech, Croatia, Slovenia); 4 Macedonian policemen

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 20th of August 2020, in a train station not far from Zelenikovo, North Macedonia, a small group of persons were apprehended by state authorities. The group was composed by 4 young men from Algeria and Morocco, aged 16-24 – with only one minor present. In the previous days, the group had made their way through the North Macedonian interior from Greece.

According to the respondent, at around 8:00 in the morning on the 20th, three officers from what he inferred to be from Croatia, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic, as well as a single North Macedonia policeman (described as wearing clothes matching those typically worn by North

Macedonian authorities) came approached and apprehended the group. The respondent described that he recognized the country of origin of first three officers due to seeing the flags from their respective countries, as well as EU flags, emblazoned on the officers' uniforms.

According to the respondent, the officers bounded them with zip ties and after beat them with batons (apart from the minor, who was not beaten). He described that the authorities also took several articles of clothes and shoes from the men, and additionally took pictures of them.

The group was then loaded into a Land Rover, which reportedly had a Slovenian license plate, and driven for a period of around an hour before arriving to a police station near Gevgelija, North Macedonia. The group was not taken into the police station, but was kept outside in the car until they were transferred under the custody of three different North Macedonian policemen to a blue police van. These officers then drove the group to the Greek-North Macedonian border, around fifteen minutes drive. Before letting the group back into Greece, through a door in the border fence, the officers struck the group-members several times with their batons. It was about 10:00 am at this point.

After crossing the border, the small group found some shoes to wear and attempted to re-enter North Macedonia again the next night.

**17/08/2020**

**“THEY DON’T CARE WHERE THEY HIT YOU. THEY HIT YOU IN YOUR EYES, EVERYWHERE.”**

**Date and time:** August 17, 2020 13:30

**Location:** Gevgelija, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.1286068927288, 22.52671531347654

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 23-40 , from: Syria, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, zip-tying hands

**Police involved:** N. Macedonian police, Frontex officers, masked officers with Czech sewed-on flags, persons in plain clothes

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 23-year-old man from Morocco, described that he had been pushed back to Greece from Albania four times and from North Macedonia 3 times.

The last time he was pushed back from Albania, he described that the police had apprehended him and his small group of travellers in mid-July, 2020, on the way to the city of Korçë, 7 kilometres away from the Greek border. According to the respondent, the officers told him that he would have a chance to apply for asylum in Albania. The Albanian police did not use any violence against them, but gave them water and food. The officers took him and his group to a nearby police station, where they took their fingerprints. After this, however, the officers then led the group back inside police vehicles and drove them to the Greek border.

Once they arrived to the border, they were led out of the vans and a pushback procedure began to play out. The respondent described that at the border, foreign officers in black clothes with visible EU flags on their shoulders (described as potentially Frontex officers), and officers in army-green clothes with flags of the Czech Republic and Germany on their shoulders were present. The latter were hitting them as they pushed them across the border.

*"They treated us like animals," the interviewee said.*

As this was happening, the respondent recalled that the Albanian officers told them to never think about coming back to Albania, and pushed them back to Greece.

According to the respondent, his last experience of being pushed back from North Macedonia in mid-August was worse. The Macedonian authorities, together with what were described as foreign officers, apprehended him with 12 other people from Morocco and Syria in the municipality of Gevgelija, near the railroad that crosses the border between Greece and North Macedonia. Upon their initial approach of the group, the authorities were violent and beat the group with large tree branches on the spot. At some point 9 people escaped and 4 were pushed back.

*"They don't care where they hit you. They hit you in your eyes, everywhere. They don't care how, maybe it's dangerous..." the interviewee told us.*

According to the respondent, the N. Macedonian police gave the people to foreign officers who continued beating them. The group was placed inside a small blue police bus and driven to the border.

At the border, the officers continued with the violence. The officers were wearing black uniforms with clearly visible Czech flags on their shoulders, and they had their faces covered with balaclavas. The respondent was under the impression that these might be Frontex officers.

According to the respondent, there were also four persons in plain clothes – shorts and t-shirts – and faces covered with masks, who were very tall and muscular. They zip-tied people's hands, pushed them on the ground, and kicked them. They also used heavy tree branches to beat them. The respondent described that he was lucky, as he was wearing a large backpack, so they did not hit his back. But the other persons were heavily beaten and were crying from pain. According to our interlocutor, the foreign officers took photos and videos of the group as they carried out this violence.

After the officers pushed them across the border, our interlocutor jumped on a train going back to Thessaloniki and returned.

17/08/2020

**“FROM WHERE [IS HE FROM] ? ALGERIA. HE SAID IF I CAN TELL HERE THAT I’M ALGERIAN.”**

**Date and time:** August 17, 2020 12:00

**Location:** Gevgelija, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.143379413399146, 22.519487758349594

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 21-30 years old , from: Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, threatening with guns, gunshots, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 policemen in short, t-shirts and bullet proof jackets. No sings or flags. Speaking English.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, 21 years old from Algeria, was apprehend by the police near Gevgelija, North Macedonia, on the 17th of August 2020. It was the second time he was trying to cross the border. On this occasion, at around 12:00 am, 6 officers caught the respondent and three other people (aged 21-30 from Algeria and Syria); they started shooting the group with guns in order to stop them. During this exchange, officers did not show the group-members any badge or announce themselves as police officers. According to the respondent, they were wearing plain clothes: shorts, t-shirts, and bullet proof jackets with no particular signs or flags on it. These men were speaking English to the group and among each other.

After catching the group, the officers ushered the group into a green Land Rover and went around for about 4 hours. The respondent described that during this time the (alleged) police did not go to any direct destination – they spent that time having coffees etc, leaving them inside the car and under the sun with no water, food, or access to toilet.

After this considerable time, the officers brought the group to the Macedonian-Greek border, in between Gevgelija and Idomeni, and kept them for about 1 hour on the border. During this time, the respondent described that the officers were physically violent with them, beating

them with batons, destroying their mobile phones, stealing their money and personal belongings (sleeping bags) and taking videos of the group-members.

During this time, the officers did not ask for any administrative or personal information from the group-members, such as their names or intended destinations. Rather, it was all described as a clandestine and informal process.

The respondent was also pushed on the ground with bounded hands behind the back and he was kicked violently by two persons. Several days later, he still had severe pain on the back that he was not able to dress and undress on his own.

After that time, the police opened a “door” along the border fence between North Macedonia and Greece, making a line out of the group-members and let them go through, beating them again as they were passing through to the other side.

The respondent then took a train from Idomeni and arrived in Thessaloniki.

16/08/2020

**“THEY DON’T CARE IF HE HIT YOU IN THE EYES, IN YOUR HEAD AND JUST HE HIT YOU AND PUSH YOU IN THE GREEK SIDE.”**

**Date and time:** August 16, 2020 01:00

**Location:** Kišava, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 40.871715746865505, 21.315509327539054

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 26-30 years old, unknown years old , from: Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, dog attacks, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 North Macedonia policemen, 7 Croatian and Czech officers; one blue van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

During the afternoon of the 15th of August, two people-on-the-move – males aged 26 and 30 years old from Algeria and Tunisia respectively – were apprehended by four male North

Macedonian police officers about 17 km from Skopje. In the previous days, the two men had made their way through the country in the hopes of continuing their journey's north towards Serbia.

Upon their apprehension, the officers were described as having treated the two men kindly, offering them food. After some time, however, the officers loaded the two men into a small blue van with no windows and drove them south towards the North Macedonian-Greek border. The two men described that van drove them to an area of the border near Kišava, North Macedonia.

At the border, they saw another small group of people-on-the-move: four Algerian men to be exact. They also described seeing an additional seven officers – two women and 5 men. The respondents referred to these officers as “NATO” and “European Police”; they explained this description by clarifying that these officers wore black clothes with black ski masks over their faces and that they had Croatian and Czech flags emblazoned on their uniforms. The respondents also described that the officers were speaking English with each other.

According to the respondents, these officers were violent with them – kicking the group, destroying their mobile phones, taking their money, insulting them, pushing their faces on the ground with tied hands behind the back. One of the respondents was also attacked by a dog, while the officers where laughing at him. They took picture of them too, but did not ask for other personal information. According to the respondents, some of the people in the other group had tried to claim for asylum, but the police answered they have no rights for asylum in North Macedonia.

Around 1:00 am o'clock on August 16th of, the group was released. They crossed the border and returned to Thessaloniki via train.

**14/08/2020**

## **“PEOPLE BEATEN WITH METAL BATONS AND THROWN INTO THE RIVER”**

**Date and time:** August 14, 2020 02:00

**Location:** Gevgelija area near the border, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.130475449957196, 22.54383425071607

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 40-50 person(s), age: 5-50 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, pepper spray, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, throwing into the river, zip-tying hands

**Police involved:** North Macedonian police, Frontex officers, Greek police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, kicking, forced to sit with their heads down and hands behind their neck

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The primary respondent for this testimony was a 47-year-old man from Afghanistan, traveling in a group of approximately 20 people, including two families with small children. During their transit attempt through North Macedonia, the group was initially apprehended on August 14th around midnight by Macedonian authorities in a village close by the Greek border on August 14, 2020. According to the respondent, the police officers approached the group and became physically violent. The officers struck various group-members with their batons. Others were pepper-sprayed, including the women and children. After this, the officers loaded the group into a van and left them there without any air conditioning, jammed, soaking in sweat for around two hours, while going about to catch more transit groups. In the end, they squashed around 40 people in a van for fit for ten persons.

*“Even the Taliban of Afghanistan treat people better than these people. They don't care about human rights or anything,” recalled the respondent.*

After this time spent waiting, the van brought the group to the bank of the Vardar river, where the officers took their shoes, bags, and extra clothes and threw everything into the river. The officers also took their mobile phones and money, stating that it was to prevent them from crossing the border into North Macedonia again right away. According to the respondent, the group was beaten brutally with metal electroshock batons and some people were thrown into the river by the police. One person was thrown in despite crying and begging not to be thrown in.

Reportedly, Frontex officers were present during this operation. The respondent described seeing foreign officers wearing uniforms with the European Union flags on their shoulders, described by our interlocutor as the “European Union police were observing the violence.”

After the beating at the riverside, the people were taken to a police station nearby, where the police officers took their photographs, which took between 30 and 60 minutes. The respondent described that if the officers realized that a person had been apprehended in North Macedonia previously, they were the victim of further physical violence. None of the group-members were given a chance to ask for asylum during this time. They were not given any food or water, and had no access to toilets. In the station, they had to squat with their hands joint behind their neck and their heads down. If someone asked to go to the toilet, the police kicked them.

After this, the group-members were taken to the border by van. The policemen opened the gate in the fence, and started pushing people through by beating them with electroshock batons. On the Greek side, the Greek authorities arrived together with Frontex officers, and gathered the people. According to the respondent, some of the group-members were victim to further physical violence from the Greek authorities, via electroshock batons. He then described that the officers took the group to a nearby police station. Our 47 year-old interviewee still had bruises on his arm from the beating after 4 days.

At the police station, if the people had money with them, they took 6 euro from them for train tickets. Those who did not have money were kept at the police station for an unknown amount of time. Others, including our interviewee, were put in a large police bus and brought to the train station in Polykastro, where they were given train tickets and put on a train to Thessaloniki.

13/08/2020

## “DETENTION AND VIOLENCE IN BULGARIA AFTER BEING PUSHED BACK”

**Date and time:** August 13, 2020 21:00

**Location:** Silistra-Ostrov border crossing, Romania

**Coordinates:** 44.1177002, 27.2767904

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Bulgaria

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 23 , from: Iran

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), sexual assault, forcing to undress

**Police involved:** 15 Romanian and Bulgarian border officials (in border police uniforms, unknown exact numbers of each), at least 1 Bulgarian 'soldier', 1 police van, 1 police car, 5 Bulgarian detention centre officers, 1 other member of Bulgarian detention centre staff (believed to be a doctor))

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Collective Aid

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 23 year old man from Iran, crossed inside a truck from Bulgaria to Romania on the 13th August 2020, at the Silistra-Ostrov border crossing. He reported that at 21:00, once the truck had entered Romanian territory (which he was aware of due to the GPS location on his phone) it then backed up across the border where the rear door was opened and he was instructed by a group of border officers to leave the vehicle. The respondent reported that there were both Romanian officers (with “BORDER POLICE” written on their uniforms in English) and Bulgarian officers (with Cyrillic writing on their uniforms). The respondent reported that the border officials were working together as the Bulgarians did not speak English (and neither did the first border official he interacted with, who was Romanian).

Once the respondent had exited the truck, he reported that he was taken into a building on the Bulgarian side of the border crossing by a Bulgarian ‘soldier’, while border officers went to speak to the truck driver. In this building, the respondent was detained overnight and reported being threatened with jail time (5 years). The border officials questioned him and at first did not believe he was Iranian, suggesting that he was from a European country. During the

questioning they instructed him to open his phone and when he asked why he reported that one of them slapped him across his face. The respondent spent eight hours in this building and was not given any food or water, despite asking for it.

The following day (14th August 2020) at approximately 05:00, the respondent was transferred in a van to an office of the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior. From here, he was put into a police car and taken to Lyubimets Detention Centre (close to the border with Turkey, and approximately a 5 hour drive away). The respondent said that while being processed to enter the detention centre, him and another person-on-the-move (male, from Syria, age unknown) had to strip naked.

First the Syrian man was interrogated naked and while this was happening the respondent was ordered to undress. When he removed his shirt, one of the 5 officers present (a short, bald and muscular man) noticed that the respondent had money hidden (300 EUR) and slapped the respondent on the face. When the respondent was fully undressed, he was taken (naked) behind a closet where he was again slapped by the officer.

In reaction to the strike to his face the respondent made a noise. The officer, who then made sexual hand gestures and noises towards him, mocking the respondent as if he were deriving sexual pleasure from being struck. None of the other officers intervened when this happened, and neither did the other staff member who was also present in the room, whom the respondent believes was a doctor as he was wearing a 'doctor's uniform' i.e. a white coat. The respondent reported that the 'doctor' was sitting behind a computer, writing down his possessions (including 2 phones and 2 power banks) to be put into a safe. This incident took place between approximately 02:00 and 02:30 on the 15th August.

The respondent spent 10 minutes in the room where this took place. He reported that the detention centre staff present there only spoke Bulgarian and laughed at him when he spoke English. The respondent wasn't given his own clothes or possessions back (he was given a white set of clothing/uniform) before being transferred into a 6m<sup>2</sup> cell which he shared with 8 people. He reported that other cells of the same size held up to 15 people. The respondent was initially not allowed out of this cell for 15 days (supposedly due to Covid quarantine, however this was not communicated to him or the other detainees).

After 15 days, he was allowed outside for fresh air and spent another 11 days in Lyubimets before being transferred to Harmanli camp, at which point he was given his possessions and clothes back. In the camp he was subject to another two week quarantine period, however during this time he was brought out of quarantine to meet with IOM staff who told him he had to either claim asylum in Bulgaria or be deported to Iran. Therefore, he registered an asylum claim in Bulgaria however he left the country and crossed into Serbia once the quarantine period in the camp had elapsed.

03/08/2020

## “EUROPEAN OFFICERS WATCHED SILENTLY AS THE NORTH MACEDONIAN POLICE WAS BRUTALLY BEATING THE PEOPLE”

**Date and time:** August 3, 2020 12:00

**Location:** Prdejtsi, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.12792023284602, 22.526506244245454

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 16 person(s), age: 19-25 , from: Pakistan, Bangladesh

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pepper spray

**Police involved:** North Macedonian police, foreign officers (Czechia, Germany)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

In August 2020, a 23-year-old man from Pakistan was caught by two Macedonian policemen near Prdejtsi, North Macedonia, together with his 3 friends of similar age. They were waiting for a train after they had crossed the border from Greece and walked for 4 hours. This was the third time they were illegally pushed back from N. Macedonia to Greece within a week. In this case (the third time), the two N. Macedonian officers forcefully struck the group several times before ushering them into a blue van without windows, in which there were already other people, all together between 15 and 16 people. Then they drove them in this vehicle back to the border between Gevgelija (N.Macedonia) and Idomeni (Greece), where they beat them again, using police batons.

At the border, there were also officers in brown color uniforms, speaking foreign languages. The marks of their uniforms might have been from Czechia and other countries, according to the respondent's observations. Reportedly, the officers speaking in foreign languages were watching silently while the blue-uniformed Macedonian police was brutally beating the people and spraying them with a chemical agent, perhaps pepper spray, which burnt the group-members eyes and skin.

During this time, the respondent received a blow to the back of his head and was still in pain at the time of the interview. He described that during this time, a foreign "soldier," perhaps German, brought 3-4 bottles of water to a person who was on the ground in pain due to the burning in his eyes, in order to wash his face. Around this time, the authorities opened a gate straddling the border between Greece and N. Macedonia and forced the group through towards the Greek side. After this, the group-members returned to Thessaloniki.

29/07/2020

## “A MAN COULDN'T SWIM, SO THEY HELD HIS HEAD UNDER WATER”

**Date and time:** July 29, 2020 14:00

**Location:** Loznica, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 44.54321514623138, 19.198526553906266

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 19-20 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** water immersion, destruction of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Unknown number of Bosnian officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On July 29 three young, Afghan men (aged 19-20) crossed over the Drina river separating Serbia from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The men had set out from the Serbian city of Loznica with the intention of continuing their journey through Bosnia. In the course of this attempt, they were apprehended by Bosnian authorities in the afternoon of July 29th, at about 2:00 pm, and violently pushed back.

Before being apprehended, they had walked about four hours into the interior of Bosnia, primarily through forested areas – they were unaware of the precise location. They had asked some locals for the way to Sarajevo. Shortly after this, Bosnian authorities dressed wearing black shirts and pants with emblazoned with a blue and yellow striped shield with a black sword on their shoulders (this is the emblem of Granična Policija: BiH – the Bosnian Border Police). The officers arrived, stopped the group, and loaded them into their vehicle which drove them back to the border. The young male respondent estimated that they drove 10 to 20km.

*The described emblem emblazoned on the uniforms of the apprehending authorities in BiH*

Upon arriving at the river border, the officers waited until no one was in sight on either side of the border and then threw the men's possessions in the river, this included their money, mobile phones and power banks. The officers then pushed the men into the river and told them to swim back to the other side.

During this time, one of the group-member's head was held under water, when he did not swim as commanded. He could not swim but moved toward the center of the river. A boat came by and saved him.

The man making this report swam to the center of the river and said he could not keep going and turned around. The Bosnian police then threatened him with their batons. His second friend helped him cross back into Serbia.

25/07/2020

## “OFFICERS WEARING UNIFORMS WITH GERMAN FLAGS”

**Date and time:** July 25, 2020 05:00

**Location:** Near the village Miravtsi (30 km north of Gevgelija)

**Coordinates:** 41.128191, 22.516876

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 29 persons person(s), age: age: 5 months, 6-8 years old, 19-60 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking

**Police involved:** 3 Macedonian officers; 2 german officers wearing uniform with german flag. 2 cars (1 Lexus model)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Independent person

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The transit group was composed by 29 persons from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh: 20 single men and the members of 2 families from Afghanistan. Mother, father, son, daughter and her 2 children; mother, father, daughter and 5 months baby.

The respondent explained that it was the second time he tried to pass through North Macedonia with his family. The first time – the day before – they were pushed back only by two North Macedonian policemen nearby Gevgelija. The officer were described as having provided them with food and water and used no violence. No asylum request were made during this time, the policemen asked them if they had previously obtained the Greek ID for asylum seekers.

On the morning of July 25th at 5:00 a.m. the group of 29 was walking near the area surrounding the North Macedonian village of Miravtsi. The group was then stopped by two vehicles (one Lexus model), driven by the North Macedonian police officers and what were described as two **German police officers wearing an uniform with german flag**. According to the respondent, the North Macedonian officers were very calm and kind, but acting as if they were not in charge in that operation. Rather, the respondent described the supposed German policemen as being very violent, having beaten the legs of the single men with batons and kicking them, screaming them not to trying again that way. At this point, the group was described as being 30 km North of Gevgelija.

The officers then divided the group, with the North Macedonian officers taking custody of the families – bringing all the members back via their car to the border with Greece. The respondent was not able to provide further information on what happened to the single men in their group.

Once they arrived to the border, the North Macedonian officers told the remaining group-members to walk back inside Greek territory close to Idomeni railway, leaving them under the sun around 10:00 a.m. with more than 35° C.

**23/07/2020**

## **“THE POLICE OFFICERS PUSHED THE RESPONDENTS IN THE BOAT AND CARRIED THEM TOWARDS AN ISLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RIVER”**

**Date and time:** July 23, 2020 07:00

**Location:** Zvornik, Bosnia Herzegovina; Mali Zvornik, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 44.45113, 19.149825

**Pushback from:** Bosnia, Serbia

**Pushback to:** Bosnia, Serbia

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 18, 25, 28, 35 , from: Syria, Egypt

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, water immersion, threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, verbal violence (shouting)

**Police involved:** 3 Bosnian male police officers wearing official dark blue uniforms, 1 police car; 3 Bosnian male police officers with official dark blue uniforms, 1 police van; undefined number of Serbian police officers; undefined number of male Bosnian police officers and 2 female Bosnian police officers wearing official dark blue uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondents in this case, a group of four people aged 18, 25, 28, 35 from Syria (three of them) and Egypt (one of them), were stopped by Bosnian police around 7.00 in the morning on the 20th of July 2020, in Zvornik, BiH.

The group was sleeping hidden close to the railway, when three male Bosnian police officers wearing official dark blue uniforms, armed with firearms and batons, arrived driving a police car. The group woke up and one respondent tried to escape. Subsequently, one police officer ran after him, while the other officers threatened him by showing their guns. The respondent stopped and the officer hit him in the face with the baton, breaking some teeth.

After this, the group-members were pushed to the ground by the officers and forced to sit keeping their hands up in the air. The officers took their phones and shoes and set fire to them, and kept the respondents' money. According to the respondent, the officers addressed them in Bosnian language first and then in English, but none of the respondents did speak nor understand English.

Allegedly after one hour, the police officers loaded the group of respondents in the police car and drove for five minutes to the river shore. There, there was an old rowboat.

**"It is no good boat, too small to go in"**, says the respondent.

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 to 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.

As the respondent described, the group spent in total two days on that island, without any access to food nor water nor shelter. After two days, at around around 7:00 am, the group tried to swim to the shore, in the opposite direction of where they came from, namely to the Serbian shore. Serbian police officers were on the shore and started shouting at them to go back on the island. So they returned to the island. The respondent does not exactly remember how many police officers were on the shore. After a while, from the Bosnian side of the river, three Bosnian police officers wearing dark blue uniforms arrived with a small boat similar to the one used two days before, and ordered to the respondents to swim back to the shore.

Once they reached the shore, the police officers loaded the respondents into a police van, by pushing them and shouting at them "*go in*". When the respondents tried to ask for explanations on what was happening, the officers shouted at them. The respondent is not sure about the exact duration of the travel, supposedly around one hour long. The respondents had no phones, thus they could not check where they were travelling to, nor could they see outside because the van had no windows. The van stopped at a police station.

At the station there were many police officers wearing dark blue uniforms, all men except for two women. At the station, the group of respondents received water and food. The police officers asked them if they had any paper but the respondents answered that the other officers had taken everything from them. So, the respondents were asked for personal information such as name, surname, country of origin, date of birth. Pictures of their faces were taken as well. Then, the police asked the group what their plan was and if they wanted to remain in Bosnia. The respondents were given some documents "*about asylum*" written in Arabic, which they read and signed. However, the respondent cannot clearly recall the actual contents of those papers, whether it was an informative document about the process to seek for asylum or the official request itself. No official translator was present at the police station during this whole process.

In all, the group spent one or two hours there. Afterwards, the group was taken to a bus station and ordered to move away from there. With the small money the respondents had managed to save from police stealing, they bought a ticket to Sarajevo, BiH, and travelled there, on the 23rd of July 2020.

**"It was horrible, there is no word, I can't explain, it was horrible, just that. I don't know any other word which can explain some feeling like that"**, says the respondent referring to what they experienced.

11/07/2020

## **"THEY TOOK US ACROSS THE BORDER TO BEAT US"**

**Date and time:** July 11, 2020 03:00

**Location:** Kusic, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 44.86815638015587, 21.494904873046856

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: Reporter 17; 11 others included children, youths and adults 18-56, from: Afghanistan, Kurdistan (country unknown)

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 13 Romanian officers wearing black from Nadis/Zlatita

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On July 11, at sometime between 3:00 and 3:30 in the morning, a group of 12 people were violently pushed back from Romania. The primary respondent for this report was a 17 year old young man from Afghanistan who, together with another young man, walked somewhat ahead of the group, scouting the route for their families. The group included two Afghan families and a Kurdish family: Five women and young women; four men and young men and three children.

The group were across the street from a cemetery in Kusic village, Serbia when they were apprehended by what the respondents described as Romanian police officers (see GPS location). The young man who made this report describes crossing the street from the cemetery and a circle of Romanian police then closing in on him and his friend; the police were described wearing black clothes and binoculars and turned on their lights when they apprehended the group. There were 13 officers.

Once they had apprehended the group, they fired their guns and forced them to walk across the border to a large white stone near the Nera river, they walked about 10 minutes. They accused the young man and his friend who were scouting of being smugglers, they faced worse beatings than the others.

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. 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.

The group was detained, beaten and searched for three or four hours before being returned back to Kusic village in Serbia.

**28/06/2020**

## **“LIKE A PING-PONG GAME”**

**Date and time:** June 28, 2020 00:00

**Location:** River border between Serbia and Romania

**Coordinates:** 44.62174307853059, 21.68466620585937

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: Children - Adults; Reporter 26 years old, travelling with wife, two children under 2 and 17 year old cousin , from: Palestine, Syria

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Romanian police and other officers referred to as "commandos"

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On around June 28, a group of 30 people were violently pushed back from Romania to Serbia. The previous week before, the group crossed into Romania from Serbia south of the Serbian city of Vršac. The group included 7 children and 23 youth and adults. The primary respondent for this report was a 26 year old Palestinian man who was travelling with his wife and two children under two years of age.

The group spent one night on the Serbian side of the border. At some time between 5:00 and 6:00 am, the Serbian police saw them and told them to go back to Belgrade. They walked some twenty minutes to the police station. The respondent spoke with the police in English and showed them his papers that said that he could leave the camp he was registered in. "It's like a ping-pong game," he said "they're playing tennis with us." Finally the police officer said he did not want to say they could go, but he did let them go. The group then went back to the same border area as before.

Upon attempting to cross, the group encountered the strong current of the Danube River which even the respondent could not swim across, though he described himself as a strong swimmer. The group went farther along the river and eventually the respondent was able to cross the river with two ropes that he tied off on the opposite side. They then purchased an inflatable raft and pulled everyone across individually.

After crossing the river, the group came to a road and had to wait until late in the evening – around 12:00 am or 1:00 am – so as not to be seen. They were “destroyed by mosquitoes” as they waited, in particular the children. Upon crossing the river, there were mountains and they kept walking with the children and bags. On the third day they reached a forest where they’d agreed to meet cars.

They spent four nights in the forest without food; it rained and they were again bitten by mosquitoes. At this time they collectively decided to surrender and go back, because of the children. Upon returning to the road, they encountered Romanian authorities.

Two officers, the respondent recalled, were very kind, and gave them food and water for the children. However, they were then loaded into and subsequently transported as a group in a single small van without seats. “We were like animals,” he said, “on top of each other.”

The respondent described being brought to officers he called “commandos” who took all their phones and power banks and took money from some people. They also began to beat the men; the women were sent aside. Some of the men ended up with broken noses; anyone who spoke was hit. At the end of this time, approximately two hours, they gave the broken phones back, but destroyed their bags of clothes.

Another group of 20 to 30 boys was there as well. They were bruised from the beatings. Everyone from both groups was brought back to Serbia.

Serbian police were called and came to the border; the group told the police that they had papers; the Serbian police asked the Romanian police if they had hit them, the Romanian police said no and they did not know what to do; speaking had led them to be hit.

When they were back in Serbia, police asked the group as well. The group confirmed the violence, showed injuries and broken phones, but the police said they could not do anything more for the group.

**25/06/2020**

## **“ROMANIA IS FULL”**

**Date and time:** June 25, 2020 20:30

**Location:** Novi Kozarci

**Coordinates:** 45.7831497, 20.6288382

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 24, 18, 56; 3 people 20-23 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Unknown number of Romanian officers; 3 Serbian police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On June 25, the 24 year old man who made this report, his 18 year old sister and their 56 year old mother crossed the border from Serbia to Romania at Novi Kozarci with along with three single men between 20 and 23 years old. All of the group-members were from Afghanistan.

The respondent and his family had set out on the transit attempt from the Serbian city of Kikinda and walked for around two or three hours before reaching the Romanian border which they crossed at about 8:00 pm. After making their way on foot in Romania for around 30 minutes, the group was approached and apprehended by a group of Romanian authorities. The respondent described that these officers acted aggressive and violent towards his group.

At first, the Romanian officers shouted at the group to stop. The three single men tried to escape on foot at this point and the police shot their firearms into the air to scare them. They were soon after apprehended. The family stopped as soon as the police ordered them to and, when approached, the primary respondent told the officers that he wanted to stay in Romania. He was told, no, "Romania is full."

The officers then brought the group to a place nearby the forest which they had been traveling. At this point, the officers were described as having slapped the male group-members in the face. They kept the group there for around four hours. All of the money that the men had on them as well as their mobile phones and power banks were taken as well. The women in the group were not searched.

All of the clothes that the group had with them, as well as the jumpers and jackets they were wearing were taken from them. The Romanian police set these belongings on fire in front of their eyes. They then called the Serbian police to escort them back. After some time, three Serbian officers arrived to the border and took them back into the country after they were released from custody and had to walk some four hours in the middle of the night before finding a place to stay.

**20/06/2020**

## "FIVE YOUNG MEN VIOLENTLY PUSHED BACK FROM ROMANIA"

**Date and time:** June 20, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Timisoara, Romania

**Coordinates:** 45.7488716, 21.2086793

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: Reporter 21; others 21-28 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Romanian officers, possibly border patrol

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Around the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, five young men aged between 21 and 28 were violently pushed back from Romania to Serbia. The primary respondent to this report was a 21 year old Afghan man. He has been violently pushed back many times from many countries; Romania, he recalled, is the worst, "they don't care about hurting you or if you die, they just beat you."

He and his group had set out at 7:00 pm from Serbia into Romania and progressed on foot until some 2 km from the city of Timisoara (ROM) when four officers – he believes they were border police, but was not able to offer a description – caught them near the city. They were spotted using binoculars and approached the group in a vehicle.

The authorities shouted at the group, but they did not dare speak back for fear of retaliation. For the next 40 minutes, the officers held the group-members in this location during which time they beat the men, kicked them and hit them with their batons. The officers also took their phones and money; expensive phones they kept, inexpensive phones they destroyed. During this time, another car was called.

When this second vehicle arrived, the men described being driven directly back to the Serbian-Romanian border. They were then let out of the vehicle and told to walk back into Serbia.

17/06/2020

## "MEDICATION STOLEN TO DETER CROSSING INTO ROMANIA"

**Date and time:** June 17, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Timisoara, Romania

**Coordinates:** 45.7488716, 21.2086793

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 18, 24, 56 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving, forced to ride in van with gasoline

**Police involved:** 12 Romanian officers; 2 Serbian police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On June 17, 2020 the 24 year old man who made this report (reporter), his 18 year old sister, and their 56 year old mother were violently pushed back from Romania.

They crossed into Romania, in the forest, on June 16 and spent an entire day in the “jungle” (forest). After this they were picked up by a driver and taken to Timisoara, Romania. The group was somewhere between 10 and 15 km from the border, on a mountain road, when the car was stopped by the police.

Upon exiting the car, the respondent immediately said that he wanted to stay in the country and expressed an intention to claim asylum. Over the course of his interaction with the Romanian officers, he repeated this two or three times. The police did not speak with them, but were instead described as beating him and the driver. During this exchange, the respondent was hit on the head with a baton and his nose was badly injured by one officer’s fist (see the attached image). Both the mother and sister watched this violence occur; his mother began to cry and the respondent described asking the officers that they beat him somewhere else so his mother didn’t see, but they refused.

In total, the respondent described that at least 12 officers were present after the car was stopped. Of these officers, one was described as female; she was sent away by her colleagues before the beating began. Of the officers present, three men, described as “tall and strong” by the respondent, participated in the beating.

Their money (some 1000 EUR and 25 USD) was stolen from them by the officers at this time. In addition, their phones were destroyed, except one that his mother had hidden in her clothing. His mother had heart surgery two years ago; they took about three months of medication from her, so that they couldn’t come back this way again.

The officers divided up the three power banks that they took from them. According to the respondent, when they took their bags of clothes they said:

*“Do not worry, we will not wear your clothes, we will burn them; you will see the smoke in the sky.”*

All of this occurred on the side of the road; there was no other traffic. They were with the Romanian officers for some three hours.

The respondent recalled that the Romanian police officers poured gasoline on the floor of the back of a prisoner-transport van before making the respondent, his sister and his mother get in and sit in it. They were not provided an explanation for this. They then drove 30 minutes to the Serbian border.

At the border they were met by a vehicle which held two Serbian officers inside – one male and one female. According to the respondent, the two groups of officers chatted and joked, between each other for a brief amount of time, implying that the two groups knew each other.

The male Serbian officer drove a car; the female officer walked about 6 or 7km with them and is described as having been very kind. They were given water and the Serbian police arranged a taxi that picked them up for which they could pay in Belgrade with a friend's money, because theirs had been stolen by the Romanian authorities.

**15/06/2020**

## **“WHEN WE SPEAK, THEY HIT A LOT. PUSHBACK FROM ROMANIA TO SERBIA”**

**Date and time:** June 15, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Near Kikinda, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 45.89115262076458, 20.534728142096526

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 18, 26, 50, 25, 25, 30 , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Romanian officers wearing all black with binoculars; Serbian police were called

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On Monday, June 15, 2020, six persons from two families were forcibly taken across the Serbian border to Romania and then pushed back to Serbia.

Family 1 consisted of two men, aged 18 and 26, and their mother, approximately 50 years of age. The second family was made up of two brothers who were about 25 and a sister who was about 30. The 18 year old man from the first family provided the information for this report.

The group was asleep somewhere between 100 and 400 meters from the Romanian border near Kikinda when they were awakened by Romanian officers. The officers were dressed all in black and were wearing binoculars; the young man who made the report believes this is how his group was spotted. After being woken up, the group told the officers that they were still in Serbia and not in Romania. Nevertheless, the men in the group were hand-cuffed

and the entire group was forced to walk to the Romanian border. They were taken to a field just on the Romanian side of the border; this was not an official border crossing.

Once on the Romanian side of the border, they were physically searched, both men and women. All officers were men. Their things were taken. This included power banks that the 18- and 26-year-old men had carried with them and the money that the group had on them (several hundred euros and some one thousand Serbian dinar). The young man reported that the power banks and money were put in the officers' pockets. They also took other possessions, including all of the clothes that the families were carrying with them and medication. The 18 year old told the Romanian officers that the bags contained medication for himself and his mother, but they were taken anyway. The officers also tore up the prescription that he carried with himself. Mobile phones were hit with stones, resulting in the complete destruction of most of them.

Both the men and women were hit with cables and with batons. The young man also reported being kicked. This went on for an estimated 20-25 minutes. They were not allowed to speak, or they would be beaten; "when we speak, they hit a lot."

After this the Romanian officers called the Serbian police who came and retrieved the group. This was not at an official crossing. The group estimated that they were in Romania for some two hours. The Serbian police asked about documents and the group reported that the Romanian officers had taken them. They were then escorted by two Serbian police cars to the second village from the border. While the police drove, the group had to go on foot. They were not provided help in getting to a camp by the police.

**13/06/2020**

## **"PUSHED BACK FROM ROMANIA AFTER 4 DAYS IN TIMISOARA"**

**Date and time:** June 13, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Timisoara, Romania

**Coordinates:** 45.7488716, 21.2086793

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: Reporter 26; 15 other adults / older minors; 6 children , from: Palestine, Syria

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** Police and officers described as "Commandos" (no further details given)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On about the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, a group of 22 persons were pushed back from Romania to Serbia. The group consisted of 16 adults (this figure may include older minors) and six younger children. Most of the group were Syrian. The primary respondent for this report was a 26 year old Palestinian man travelling with his wife, his 21 month old daughter and 9 month old son. In addition, his 17-year-old cousin also travelled with them.

The group entered into Romania from Serbia on foot. For three nights the group walked through forests, sleeping during the day. On the third day of their journey, a taxi came and brought the group to a different forest some 10 km away; they were not brought further because the driver was concerned that children would cause them to be caught.

The group again spent the night in the forest. It was cold and the group recalled being harassed by the mosquitoes throughout the night. The next day a car came at 3:00 am and took them to Timisoara. They were delivered to a small basement "apartment" of about 6 square meters, in which all 22 persons stayed for four days.

After four days, the police arrived to the house. The respondent suspected that a neighbor may have seen them and alerted the police to their presence. When this happened, the group fled the apartment and ran to nearby forest. After six hours they were apprehended by more Romanian authorities. The police told them they would interview them and bring them to a camp; the group welcomed this procedure, because, the respondent described, it was better than going back to Serbia. They informed the police of how long they had been in Romania.

However, unbeknownst to them they were already on the way back to Serbia. They were first crammed into the back of a police van for a drive of about one hour. They were then transferred to what the respondent referred to as a "commando" car [no further details were given], which brought them to the border.

At the border, their phones were taken and destroyed; their power banks were also taken. The group did not experience any further violence from the authorities.

The man who made this report did so in fluent German. He was, in fact, born in Germany, lived there for the first fifteen years of his life and attended school there, however, in that time his family's asylum claim was never completed. His family moved to Lebanon when he was 15; as a Palestinian he has remained stateless in spite of spending the first fifteen years of his life in an EU country.

12/06/2020

## "TWO PUSHBACKS FROM ROMANIA IN THREE DAYS"

**Date and time:** June 12, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Near Bela Crkva (Serbia)

**Coordinates:** 44.90182129999999, 21.4232908

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: Adults 30s and 40s; children 3, 7, and 9 years old , from: Afghanistan, Kurdistan (country unknown)

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** First incident: more than 8 Romanian officers; 2 Serbian police officers  
Second incident: Unknown number of Romanian officers; 2 Serbian police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Three families, from Kurdistan and Afghanistan, were pushed back from Romania twice in three days. The first pushback included violence, while the second was described as non-violent but with a threat of potential violence.

The respondent we spoke to for these reports was a 30 year old physician from Afghanistan. He is on the move with his sister, brother-in-law (30s) and nephew (three years old). They were travelling with a young Kurdish man and a Kurdish woman in her 40s travelling with her to 7 and 9 year old children.

All three families had left Vranje Camp and were moving toward the Romanian border together. The respondent described being approached by authorities near Bela Crkva (SRB) on the evening of June 12. They saw bright lights and heard people shouting at them that they needed to move; initially they were happy, assuming these were Serbian forces chasing them away from the Serbian border so they ran across the border into Romania.

Once they reached the Romanian side of the border they were soon-after apprehended by Romanian authorities and ordered to stop and the women and children were separated from the men. More than eight police officers were involved. The men of the group were slapped hard, kicked and were beaten with batons and cords, however, this was done through their clothing so that there were few physical signs of the injuries. This went on for some ten minutes.

The men were searched and their money, power banks and possessions taken; mobile phones were destroyed. The officers asked if everyone was Afghan and the Kurdish woman admitted to being Kurdish. At this time the male officers searched her body and took her money and mobile as well. The officers were also described as breaking the child's tablet. The Afghan woman was not searched.

After this, Serbian authorities, two officers in one car, were called and took the group back to Serbia. The group-members reported the thefts to the Serbian police, but were told that nothing could be done. The man making this report said that in both this case and the latter case, the Serbian police were kind to them and did not employ any violence or speak to them cruelly.

Three days later, on the evening June 15, the group tried again, this time near the village of Jimbolia (ROM). Shortly after crossing, they were apprehended by Romanian officers

approximately three or four kilometers from the border. The respondent described that the officers had been watching them with night vision or infrared cameras.

The Romanian authorities, three officers from two vehicles, did not beat them and the respondent referred to them as “good,” adding that they inquired after the young child and its well-being. Nonetheless, the officers we described to have said, “If we catch you tomorrow, we must beat you.” They were held in a corn field on the Romanian side of the border and looked for a possibility of escape. The respondent was told, “we are not bad men, but if you try to escape we must shoot you.” They did not try to escape because of the women and children in their company. Eventually, the group was brought back to the Serbian border and pushed back without further incident.

**04/06/2020**

## **“POLICE TAKE ME BACK GREECE AND WHAT I DO? I STAY IN BORDER...SLEEP AND REST AND I TRY AGAIN AT NIGHT”**

**Date and time:** June 4, 2020 13:00

**Location:** near Ponçarë (ALB)

**Coordinates:** 40.52736021693904, 20.98541221702854

**Pushback from:** Albania

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: 20-50 years old , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 4 police cars and 15-20 officers; 3 police cars and 6 officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent spent ten days attempting to cross the ALB-GRK border; he was pushed back a total of five times during this experience.

***“Police take me back Greece and what I do? I stay in border. Stay all day, sleep and rest and I try again at night”***

The following account details the one of these push-backs which took place on 4th June 2020 at approximately 03:00. The respondent was walking through a mountainous region near

Koshnicë (ALB) when he noticed a bear; the respondent ran away from the bear and was blinded by police headlights.

***“I go police, its better than it eats me, this animal”***

The respondent indicated the use of thermal cameras, night vision goggles or some similar equipment by the officers and described them as having

***“something to see you at night, to see your blood”***

The respondent alleged there were roughly 15-20 police officers with four vehicles. After his arrest, he was taken to a camp which he thought was near the village of Ponçarë (ALB). At the camp the officers took his fingerprints and photograph, and later provided him with food and water. At approximately 13:00, the respondent was placed into a car with three Algerian men and one man from Morocco. They were driven to the ALB-GRK border and pushed back (exact location unknown). The respondent alleges two other cars full of transit groups were also pushed back at the same time; a group of four Moroccan men in one and four Syrian women with two small children in the other (a little boy and a baby whose gender is unknown). The respondent reported that a total of six officers were involved in the push-back, with two officers in each car.

Following this push-back the respondent made several attempts to re-cross the border before returning to Thessaloniki (GRK) to recuperate. The respondent said that during these multiple push-back's, the officers asked him to unlock his phone so they could access and photograph the route he planned to take.

***“they [the officers] take money from these people and take these people from Albania [to push them back to Greece]”***

**01/06/2020**

**“[FRONTEX IN ALBANIA] THEY HAVE NO MERCY”**

**Date and time:** June 1, 2020 07:00

**Location:** Trestenik, Albania

**Coordinates:** 40.58594105978595, 21.041688737762616

**Pushback from:** Albania

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 21-25 y.o. , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, threatening with guns, gunshots

**Police involved:** 15/16 police officers at apprehension (6 Frontex with balaclava + Albanian police and undetermined number in station), 2 Frontex + 2 Albanian at the border, 3 cars

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On 31st May 2020 the respondent (a Moroccan national) went in a group of 7 people and tried to cross from Greece into Albania. At 23:00, the transit group went to buy something to eat in the Albanian town of Miras, just 2 km from the Greek border. But before they arrived they were caught by the police officers.

According to the respondent, those who stopped the group were equipped with night vision goggles. The respondent said that when the group were captured, the treatment was very “racist”. The authorities kept them waiting on the ground while laughing among each other, which “*makes them feel without dignity*”. The respondent claims that the Albanian police treated them well, that those who made them feel badly treated were Frontex officers.

The respondent was shown a photo of the European Agency’s uniform, which includes distinctive blue armbands with the logo. The respondent confirmed these accessories were worn by the officers, stating: “*exactly*”. Among others, the transit group alleged they were handled by German officers and Hungarian officers\* (Frontex officer wear their national uniforms while on missions).

“*They don’t treat you humanly at all.*”

Of the seven who were captured, some tried to flee. However, these people were beaten by officers, with the use of a “*kind of truncheon but like metal*”. Six or seven policemen, whom they described as “*big, strong, and not ashamed to hit you*”, used physical violence against them: “*they are heartless*”.

The transit group claim that the policemen wore balaclavas. They say that while they were being taken to the car, they were being kicked from behind. At this point in the episode, the officers even pulled out their guns and shot twice in the air. According to the interviewee, in total there were approximately 15 or 16 police officers, although according to him it is difficult to specify the exact number because “*there were many of them*”. They were in three camouflaged cars, “*at no time do you think they are police cars*”: a Renault Picanto, a Ford Maradona (where they were taken) and another vehicle similar to the Dazia.

At around 01:00 on the evening of 1st June 2020, the transit group were taken to the police station in Bilisht, Albania. The road was a mountain road, the three cars were with them. The group were denied food, despite stating that they were hungry. At the police station they met Frontex officers again.

The group were fingerprinted and had pictures taken of all four profiles. In turn, they were carefully searched, even their pants were taken off. Before taking their data, they were told that they would be taken to a camp in Tirana, the capital. The translator was wearing a blue vest. But once they got all their personal information the group were taken to a kind of cell in a basement. They claim that the place where they were put *“not even the dogs could be there”*. They had been told that the camp was closed and that they could not enter, but the respondent assures them that he has some friends in the camp in Tirana and that this is not true that such a closure had taken place.

According to the respondent the officers asked them why they wanted to come to Europe. They replied that their dream was to come to Europe, to which the officers replied again saying that *“no, they should go away because they have nothing to do in Europe”*. The transit group say that at the police station they met with UNICEF staff, though nothing was done to assist in their case:

*“those with the blue logo and the hand. Human rights organizations and human rights are just rumors”*.

At 07:00 in the morning of the 1st June 2020, the transit group were taken out of the police station in Bilisht. Two Albanian and two Frontex police officers took them to the border area. At the border they took out their batons as a threat, but made sure that the Greek police couldn't see this. The respondents didn't know whether they were the same officers or different from those who had captured them because their eyes could only be seen through the balaclava.

The respondent closed the interview expressing his feeling of regret for the situation that Spain and Italy have gone through because of the Coronavirus, *“I am sorry I could not help because they are wonderful people”*.

\*Note: It would appear that the alleged nationalities of the Frontex officers does not match the deployment of sending states in the Albanian mission. However this may be born out in confusion over the national flags of other **sending states** (Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Poland and Slovenia), or the fact that officers of other nationalities were communicating in German.

**31/05/2020**

## **“SECOND PUSHBACK BY FRONTEx IN 48 HOURS”**

**Date and time:** May 31, 2020 06:00

**Location:** vicinity of Trestenik (GR/AL border)

**Coordinates:** 40.572324313482746, 21.044647175475983

**Pushback from:** Albania

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 17 - 30 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria, Egypt

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 2 Frontex officers (Poland/Romania), unknown number of Albanian officers, vehicle with Polish registration, other police vehicle

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

**The group of nine, which included a 17 year old teenager, were pushed back to Greece by Frontex officers. Occurring close to Trestenik (Albania), it was the second time in just two days that they had been removed illegally by the European Agency.**

After being pushed back in the early hours of 30th May 2020 ([link](#)), the transit group took a day to rest in a village in northern Greece close to the Albanian border. The respondent interviewed was part of a group of 9 people. He came from Morocco, while the others were from Algeria and one man from Egypt. The group were aged between 17 and 30 years old.

After the first removal from Albania, he stated that the group rested in the woods in Greece on 30th May 2020.

*“we stay, we eat, we sleep and around 9 or 10 pm we go again to Albania”*

The group then reentered Albania and took a similar route as before. They were stopped almost in the same point of the previous day, this time a little further away from the village of Trestenik (Albania). The respondent asserted that the capturing police officers had infrared binoculars to detect them in the dark. The apprehension occurred at approximately 00:00 – 00:30 on 31st May 2020.

The respondent stated that the group tried to evade capture by running, but the police caught all nine of them. The respondent was the last one to be caught. According to the respondent there were three police officers present. One from Albania, one from Poland and from Romania. The plate of the car that they used was from Poland.

The Polish and Romanian officers had blue Frontex armbands worn over their national uniforms. The respondent described how the officers questioned them for their identity and how they had crossed. They also took pictures of everyone in the transit group.

Ten minutes after the initial capture, additional officers arrived with another vehicle and transferred the nine people to a nearby police station which the respondent identified as in Bilisht (Albania). They were detained in this station for around five hours. At approximately 06:00, the authorities drove the group to the border in a 4x4 vehicle and ordered them back into Greek territory. The transit group returned to the improvised shelter they had been resting in before by foot.

After the pushback, the group were caught at a village shop by Greek police. The officers took them to Kastoria bus station (Greece) and order them to take a bus, stating they could not

remain in the border area (even if they had papers regularising their stay in Greece).The respondent stated that despite the successive illegal pushbacks they had faced they would try to cross again:

*"This night we go again. We should be patient"*

**30/05/2020**

**"I HAVE SEEN A LOT OF SUFFERING. WHAT I CAN DO NOW? NOTHING. I WILL TRY AGAIN."**

**Date and time:** May 30, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Gevgelija, N. Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.128198169570446, 22.516936728333885

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 16 person(s), age: 7-45 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, India

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Two male officers wearing N. Macedonian police uniform and medical masks, two officers at Tabanovce Camp, three unmasked male officers wearing N. Macedonian police uniform, one police van.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A transit group of seven people (all men, three of whom are from Pakistan and four from Afghanistan) attempted to cross N. Macedonia from Gevgelija (MKD) via train. They were aiming for the capital city Skopje (MKD) with plans to later proceed to Serbia. However, when the train reached Negotino (MKD), two officers wearing medical masks searched the train and subsequently apprehended the transit group. The officers asked the transit group if they had documentation to which the respondent, a 37 year old man from Pakistan, said:

*"I don't have any document, so what can I do?"*

The respondent described how the officers then contacted their colleagues making a request for a police van in order to transport the group elsewhere. Whilst they waited for the van to arrive, the transit group were held in one of four shipping containers next to the train station. The respondent describes the container as being air conditioned, stating that when the doors

of the container were closed there was an 'air problem'. This, he asserts, led the officer to open the doors after announcing:

*I will open the doors and you sit here, and I will come back.*

The transit group used this as an opportunity to escape apprehension by running away. The respondent split up from the rest of the group and proceeded to walk to Tabanovce (MKD) over consecutive days. Some friends had previously told the respondent that there was a refugee camp in Tabanovce (MKD), near the N. Macedonia-Serbia border and to seek it out if he needed assistance, medical or otherwise. The respondent said he had sustained injuries to his feet from repeatedly walking over difficult terrain during his journey and, as such, decided to enter the camp.

Upon entering, two officers asked for the respondent's information, then took his fingerprints and photograph. Afterwards, he was seen by medical staff who checked his temperature which, he asserts, was a precaution against the possible spread of COVID-19. The medical staff then gave the respondent pain killers for his feet and told him that the doctor would see him in the morning.

*Tomorrow, you will come. The doctor, he will see you.*

The respondent woke at 08:00 and had some breakfast before being summoned by some officers working in the camp. The officers placed the respondent in the back of a van with 16 other people, including a Syrian family. The group were transported to Gevgelija (MKD) on the N. Macedonia-Greek border where the officers pushed them back saying:

*That is the gate. You go inside to Greece.*

The respondent emphasized that transporting such a large number of people in close confines was "not fair because of Corona [...] Anyone have Corona, everyone have Corona". The respondent also mentioned that the three officers involved in the push-back all failed to wear medical masks which is why he could identify them as men. The respondent also believed that approximately an additional 70 or 80 people were pushed back from the camp on the same day, including two other families. Following the push-back, the respondent made his way back to Thessaloniki (GRK) by train from the border region of Idomeni (GRK), commenting:

*"I have seen a lot of suffering. What I can do now? Nothing. I will try again."*

30/05/2020

## “NEXT TIME IF YOU RUN WE CAN SHOOT ON YOU, IF WE SAID 'STOP', YOU STOP”

**Date and time:** May 30, 2020 15:00

**Location:** on the way to the village of Trestenik

**Coordinates:** 40.57896617046769, 21.044435319793866

**Pushback from:** Albania

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 17 - 30 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria, Egypt

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** threatening with guns

**Police involved:** 2 Frontex police officers wearing blue armbands (one identified as Slovenian) using torches, multiple Albanian officers, 4x4 vehicle

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 29th May 2020, at approximately 23:00 the respondent began walking with a group of eight other people through the forest in northern Greece to Albania. The respondent was from Morocco, one man was from Egypt and the others from Algeria. The youngest in the group was aged 17 years old.

The group crossed the border on foot. After 5/6 km walking in the Albanian side the group reached a village (Trestenik). Suddenly a group of police officers appeared and shone torches on them:

*“we were normally walking and when we look to our back I see someone walk to us and take lamps and I understand was NATO and at the end they caught us”*

The respondent recalled seeing three officers. According to the respondent the police officers wore dark blue uniforms (“*nuit bleue*”) and wore a light blue band on the upper arm (visually identified as a Frontex accessory). Frontex officers are often described by the transit community as “NATO” because of the matching sky blue uniforms worn by the respective agencies. The respondent stated that one of the officers was a Slovenian official, and that another was from Albania.

According to the respondent the police shouted to them:

*“no problem come here no problem, come come”*

The group stopped and the officers addressed them with a threat:

*"They said to us 'next time if you run we can shoot on you, if we said 'stop', you stop'. This maybe to be us scared"*

The group were held at the point of apprehension, having been caught at around 23:30. The Frontex officials asked them why they had entered from Greece and told them that because of the COVID-19 pandemic it was not possible. The officers also took pictures of the groups faces.

*"They make us photos 'come with us we take pictures, don't worry; why you came here? you know Albania is close now problem with corona'"*

At midnight, another police car came and the officer took the group of nine to the police station in the Bilisht (Albania). They described the second car as a 4x4 vehicle.

According to the respondent the police asked a lot of questions about their origins and route, using a friendly conversational tone. The respondent said that the authorities were not writing down the "interview" in a formal transcription. The authorities in the police station took pictures again of all nine people using two mobile phones. The officers did not fingerprint the group, or issue any information on the procedure that was occurring.

After being questioned, the transit group were taken to detention cells in the basement of the station, ("we go downstairs"). They were given food and water by the authorities. The group were detained here for around 13-14 hours.

At around 14:00/15:00 on 30th May 2020 the group was brought back to the border with Greece by car (4x4). Two officers drove, with the detainee group sat in the rear. The police officers left the group near the Greek border in a forested area close to Trestenik. While still inside Albanian territory the officers ordered them back into Greece, stating:

*"we cannot help you we are doing our job"*

The group then returned to an improvised shelter they had used the night before and rested. The following day they attempted a second crossing and were pushed back again (**as reported in this testimony**).

**06/05/2020**

**"I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING IN GREECE. IT'S YOUR PROBLEM"**

**Date and time:** May 6, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Close to Idomeni

**Coordinates:** 41.12860710618745, 22.517794521882475

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 39 , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 4 N. Macedonian officers (2 with a patrol car, 2 with a van)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent in this case was a 39 year old Algerian man who had been in North Macedonia (MNK) since 29th January 2020. The respondent was staying in a camp at the time of the incident and had expressed intent to claim asylum in MNK. Though he had initially applied for asylum in North Macedonia, during his time in the centre in Skopje he decided to make a voluntary return to Algeria through the program run by International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Presenting at the IOM office he had been told by staff he needed to wait until “corona finishes”, and then he would be able to return to Algeria. The staff stated that he would likely be able to travel after the 1st August 2020.

However in late April a fight broke out between residents of the camp, and the respondent was asked to leave the centre. Though not directly involved in the fight, the respondent shared that a group of people were removed by the camp staff, and told that they could no longer stay there.

Describing the actions of the camp director the respondent says *“they treat us like racist”* and that the order for them to leave was consistent with the “mafia”-like actions of the camp management. He stated that during his stay in the camp, he observed that preferential treatment was given to smugglers and people with money inside the camp, meanwhile those without means were the subject to abuse and lost access to basic things like food. The respondent said that camp staff regularly stole food from the residents.

“Staff [imitates spitting]. They look us like animals”

The respondent states that the camp served pork meat in the canteen and staff replied to those that complained: *“eat or leave”*. On the 1st May 2020 when the respondent was forced to leave the camp, the director and staff removed his camp card and ordered him to exit the site (this in the middle of the COVID-19 lockdown).

“No bus, no food”

The respondent shared that everything was closed due to the pandemic restrictions. He had nowhere to sleep and limited access to basic amenities. He walked for five days, sleeping rough on the roadside. On the 6th May, while around 13km north of Gevgelija the respondent was stopped by two MNK police officers in dark uniforms who drove by in a patrol car.

The police called a further two officers who arrived from Gevgelija with a van. They drove the respondent to the border with Greece. The respondent asked:

*"If I go to Greece maybe the police send me to Turkey?"*

The respondent went on to say he was scared of this, and what Turkish police might do to him when he was removed there. The officers displayed little concern for this and replied to him:

*"I don't know what's happening in Greece. It's your problem"*

The police drove him to a section of border fence and expelled him into Greek territory through a gate in the fence close to a railwayline (suggested to be close to Idomeni).

*"They showed me the train, opened the door"*

Describing the whole incident the respondent stated *"we want our rights"* and was saddened that *"Macedonia don't give us asylum"*. At the time on interview, the respondent was sleeping rough on the streets of Thessaloniki and had not regularization document through fear of being pushed back to Turkey.

**02/05/2020**

## **"FROM NORTH MACEDONIA TO GREECE"**

**Date and time:** May 2, 2020 03:30

**Location:** Alongside the railway that connect Thessaloniki with Bitola

**Coordinates:** 41.128541538308056, 22.514714776795643

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: Y. 25 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Army officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On Friday 1st May 2020, the respondent together with three more people from Morocco attempted to cross from Greece to North Macedonia. Around 18:00 or 19:00 of that day, the transit group of four were caught in the train in which they were traveling as stowaways.

Although the specific location is unknown, the respondent states it was North Macedonian territory. He also asserts that the officers who found them in the train were wearing army clothes (green uniforms) and carrying big guns. There were between 6 or 7 officers. They asked the transit group for their bags and took all their clothes from their backpacks, and only gave back their food.

After this, three army officer transferred them by a van, white colour, in which the group in transit were sat in the rear, as there were chairs in the backside of the vehicle. They took them to an "office" building. The respondent shared that he didn't know what kind of facility it was, describing it as a "building with one floor, surrounded by a fence; inside the place there were two small rooms and one big room". The respondent stated it was like an "army station, not police station". They waited inside for seven hours, and officers asked them their names, where they come from and other questions according to the respondent. They were not fingerprinted or taken pictures or given any document.

At 03:00 or 04:00 on 2nd May 2020, the group in transit were taken to the border with Greece guarded by three police officer. Those told them: "go!" after opening a door in the fence. They did not insult or exercise violence against the respondent. In Greece, they walked like 45 minutes till they arrived to one train station to come back to Thessaloniki.

26/04/2020

## "THE OFFICERS OPEN THE DOOR AND TOLD THEM GO"

**Date and time:** April 26, 2020 17:00

**Location:** Gevgelija, N. Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.12706860861404, 22.514246270338294

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 10 person(s), age: 20-29 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** At least four officers (total number unknown)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

After a push-back from Serbia to N. Macedonia taking place on 17th April 2020 (**BVMN report**), the respondent in question (aged 24 and from Algeria) spent one week in a forested area near the village of Lojane (MKD) with a transit group of five other men (from Morocco and Tunisia, aged between 20-28 years old). On approximately 24th April 2020, the respondent decided to travel to Skopje (MKD) with three other people from this larger group. Whilst in Skopje two officers wearing surgical masks approached the transit group and asked them "you are

*immigrant?”, to which they replied “yes”. The transit group then told the officers “we want to come back [to Greece]”.*

The officers transported the transit group to a camp back in Lojane (MKD). At the camp, the transit group was given food, water and medical attention, having a doctor treat them for dog bites sustained in a previous incident. The officers also photographed the transit group and took their fingerprints.

After two days, on approximately 26th April 2020 at 17:00, the transit group, along with seven other people were placed in a blue van accompanied by two police officers and transported to the border region of Gevgelija (MKD) (exact location unknown). Here, the officers “*open the door*” and told them “*go*”, a description which refers to the opening of a gate in the border fence for them to be removed into Greek territory. The respondent described these officers as being “*nice*” as they had given the transit group cigarettes to smoke. After the push-back, the transit group got on a train to Thessaloniki (GRK) avoiding Greek authorities en route.

**22/04/2020**

## **“THEY WANT TO KILL US. THEY WANT TO KILL US.”**

**Date and time:** April 22, 2020 02:00

**Location:** Gevgelija

**Coordinates:** 41.128232629955434, 22.516961974295846

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 20, 23, 28, 29 , from: Palestine, Morocco, Egypt

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, threatening with guns

**Police involved:** One officer described as ‘cagol’, wearing a black top and green trousers. Seven army officers. All officers were male and wearing surgical masks. The officer described as ‘cagol’ was either bald or had a shaved head. One blue van or bus.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The transit group concerned in this incident consists of four men, two of whom are from Morocco, and the others from Egypt and Palestine. On 21 April 2020, at around 20:00, two members of the transit group were walking through Gevgelija, N. Macedonia when they were approached by three officers dressed in army uniform. The officers told the two men to “*wait, wait*” before placing them on a blue van or bus. Once in the confines of the vehicle, the officers began to beat the men with batons. The officers beat one respondent with such force that they fractured his arm. These two men were in custody for approximately six hours before being driven to the N. Macedonia-Greece border. Here, they were confronted by more officers who had apprehended two other members of their transit group not long before.

The experience of these other members in the transit group went as follows. At approximately 02:00 on 22 April 2020 in the Gevgelija region, one member of the transit group was abruptly woken up by three officers who were stamping on him, and kicking him across his body and head. The respondent describes these three officers as wearing surgical masks and army attire and reported feeling that the officers found the situation funny and enjoyed beating him.

### ***“They loved this, they found it funny”***

Meanwhile, another member of the transit group who was walking nearby got stopped by two officers. Yet again the officers were violent using batons and fists to beat the respondent. These officers were also wearing surgical masks which concealed their faces and carried binoculars. One, was dressed in army attire whilst the other had a bald or shaved head and was wearing a black top and green trousers. The respondent described this officer as ‘cagol’, referring to the masks, and felt that he was the more aggressive of the two, asserting:

### ***“They want to kill us. They want to kill us”***

This respondent claimed that when he told the officers he was from Palestine, they proceeded to beat him more. Following this, the five officers demanded that the two men take their shoes off and they walked them approximately two kilometres to the border. At the border, they were reunited with two other members of their transit group who had been apprehended earlier that evening (at 20:00, on 21 April 2020).

During the apprehension, the respondents were not taken to a police station and were only ever detained on the blue van or bus. They did not have their fingerprints or photograph taken and did not request asylum. The respondents’ reported being hit with guns as well as the officers’ batons during the various beatings. The officers also repeatedly shouted at them, although they did not always understand what the officers were saying as there were issues with communication. All members of the transit group were denied access to food and water. In fact, when one respondent made a request for water, he was beaten by the officers again.

The transit group told the officers, *“we don’t want to stay in Macedonia, we want to go in Serbia”* but the officers ignored them and instead, *“opened the door of the border”* to Greece (a gate described as on the border fence). The officer described as ‘cagol’ then chased the transit group across the border, approximately 10 metres into Greece, whilst shouting *“go, go, never come back”* and waving his baton at them. As a result, the transit group decided to make their way back to Thessaloniki, Greece.

Following this incident, the respondent from Palestine expressed feeling sick because of the on-going situation he finds himself in, claiming that he was losing his hair as a result of the stress. The respondent reported that whilst in Thessaloniki he had been fined €300 on two different occasions, as a consequence of the restrictions of movement established in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. During the lock-down, the fines usually amount to €150 for pedestrians moving through the city without a permit, but on both occasions he was fined twice that amount.

19/04/2020

## “WE ARE VERY TIRED, PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY”

**Date and time:** April 19, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Lojane

**Coordinates:** 41.127948394615004, 22.516692260577887

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: A. 32 years old , from: Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 2

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of twelve Algerians in this case were removed by Serbian authorities with the use of force from Presevo camp, Serbia, to North Macedonia. This incident occurred on 19th April 2020, and the transit group were ejected at the border area close to the town of Lojane.

Upon arrival in MNK, the transit group were assisted by local people who invited them to have some food. The respondent recalls, “*They were nice people*”. After the meal, they went to a mosque where they charged their phones. However, the manager of the building told them to leave because they were not allowed to be there.

Outside, police from North Macedonia apprehended them and took them to a camp where they took their photographs and fingerprints. According to the respondent, “*the camp is between Serbia and North Macedonia, it looks like an old camp, nobody there*”. By the geographic description of the pushback location and drive time, it seems this is likely to have been the **Tabanovce Transit Centre**. They slept at the camp for one night, and were given biscuits from the Red Cross.

“*We are very tired, physically and psychologically*”.

The following day, on 20 April 2020, police told them that they would take them to have a medical assessment for Coronavirus. They were loaded into a blue van and driven for several hours. However, instead of any medical facility, the group were brought them to the North

Macedonia-Greek border. The twelve people in the transit group were accompanied by two MNK officers (driver and front seat passenger).

The police opened the “door” of the fence that separates North Macedonia from Greece (see map below) and told them to go.

*The transit group came back to Thessaloniki by train, where they lack access to regularised stay, stable accommodation, basic utilities or services such as a showers, water and medical health care.*

17/04/2020

## “SERBIAN AUTHORITIES PLACE US 500M ABOVE THE BORDER, THEY BEAT YOU AND BRING TO THE BORDER”

**Date and time:** April 17, 2020 20:30

**Location:** Lojane area, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 42.222292157336824, 21.53755524840302

**Pushback from:** Kosovo, Serbia

**Pushback to:** Greece, North Macedonia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 32 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** Unknown number of officers, 2 vehicles- one of them described as "army car". Workers of the camp involved. Army officers wearing balaclavas

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent left Algeria nine months prior to the report. Along with two other people, he had been taken to Precevo camp in Serbia after having been caught trying to cross into Bosnia-Herzegovina. The respondent spent 40 days at the camp, and stated that he did not cause any trouble there.

On 17th April 2020 at 20:30, the staff of the camp (“servers”) asked those who had an expired card to come with them and get it renewed. This request was made in the dining hall whilst the respondent and others were eating.

***“Your card is old, we need to change it”***

***“They take people randomly”***

A group of 20 people from Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Morocco and Algeria were brought to the “Commando office” or, as the respondent described it, “one room of the manager of the place”.

In this room, the workers of the camp turned off the light and, at that moment, police and personnel in military style attire entered and seized the group of camp residents. The authorities were described as were wearing balaclavas covering their faces. Some were dressed in blue police uniforms, while others had trousers and tops “like army green”.

The officer used force and manhandled the group of 20, taking them to a “furgo” (blue van). People in the respondent’s group asked where they were going, but received no answer: they did not know where they were going. This group, including the respondent, did not bring any personal belongings with them as they did not know what was happening.

***“They treat us like animals, this is Guantanamo”***

The group was transported in the blue van, escorted by another “army car” which drove alongside. The journey lasted only a short period and the respondent said it was approximately 8km they were driven. Once they arrived, they got out off the van “one by one” and found themselves in a forest area near the border of North Macedonia and in the region of Lojane (precise location unknown).

The officers asked the group to sit down and started to beat some of them with batons. The group fled across the border to North Macedonia, close to the village of Lojane.

***“They beat us and throw us in the border”***

The authorities used “sticks and guns” to threaten the transit group. Describing the pushback the respondent shared how:

***“they (Serbian authorities) place us 500m above the border, they beat you and bring to the border”***

The respondent spent one night sleeping hidden in North Macedonia and, the next day, 18th April 2020, crossed from MNK to Kosovo with two other people. They walked 30 km through

Kosovo but were also caught by authorities there. According to the respondent, the police were “good” although they pushed them back to North Macedonia. See yellow-star-pin in the map below.

Two others in the group attempted to enter a camp in the north of MNK. The individuals presented at a centre in Tabanovtse, but were denied entry by the staff allegedly because of restrictions around Coronavirus. These two persons then continued trying to cross into Serbia but were prevented by Serbian police on several occasions.

Eventually the pair traveled to Gevgelija (MNK) where they were apprehended by two police officers near the central station. The police put them inside a van and drove them to the border with Greece. At the border they pushed them back through a “door” in the fence and the two returned themselves to Thessaloniki. This occurred on 28th April 2020.

The respective groups (who had entered Kosovo or stayed in MNK) were reunited in Greece, having been pushed back across the span of a week. They now remain in squatted accommodation and without the temporary regularization document (“khartia”) needed to reside in the territory.

**17/04/2020**

## **“THE OFFICERS ENCOURAGED THE DOGS TO ATTACK”**

**Date and time:** April 17, 2020 19:00

**Location:** Between Miratovac (SRB) and Lojane (MKD)

**Coordinates:** 42.243779184762055, 21.66384385293588

**Pushback from:** Serbia

**Pushback to:** North Macedonia

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 20-28 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, dog attacks

**Police involved:** six police officers, four officers wearing military uniform, two unmuzzled dogs, two police vans

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent in question (aged 24 and from Algeria) was in Preševo camp (SRB) when, on 17th April 2020, he was approached by some employees who worked in the camp. These employees asked the respondent to give them his camp I.D. card because, they told the

respondent, he would be transported to another camp. The camp's "boss" called the police whilst he, and others, were rounded up.

Six officers arrived in two blue police vans. At around 16:00 supervised by two of the officers, the respondent was placed in the back of a van with five other men (from Morocco and Tunisia, aged between 20-28 years old). The respondent states that he felt the employees of the camp and the officers worked in conjunction to trick the respondent because they were not driven to another camp, as promised, but instead taken to the Serbia-N. Macedonia border.

*"Change camp and then after no change camp"*

The respondent asserted that all day long people had been collected from the camp and taken away, in groups of between five and seven people (**see another report from that day taken by BVMN confirming this**). The groups that the respondent witnessed being taken from Preševo camp (SRB) were all composed of men in their twenties and from many different countries including Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco and Tunisia. He believed these groups were also taken to the Serbia-N. Macedonia border and pushed-back and felt the reason the authorities lied to the various groups was:

*"because they don't want to make [us] afraid and run away"*

They arrived at the border at around 19:00 and were met by two additional police officers and four officers wearing military attire, as well as two unmuzzled dogs. All the officers at the border were wearing masks, although the respondent insisted they were not the type of surgical masks commonly seen since the outbreak of COVID-19, but that they were "commando" and "professional", implying they belonged to police or military uniform.

The respondent recalls being unable to tell the gender of any of the officers at the border because their faces were completely hidden by the masks. The officers at the border told the transit group *"this is the border"*, then proceeded to beat them with batons, to kick them, punch them, "everything". The officers encouraged the dogs to attack the group and, as a result, the respondent was bitten on his leg multiple times. Other members of the transit group were also bitten by the dogs and the respondent said he felt the officers shouted insults at them in Serbian, understanding that they were saying something negative about his mother. The respondent said of the officers:

*"they are dangerous"*

After the beating the officers told the transit group "go" and then they crossed the border somewhere between Miratovac (SRB) and Lojane (MKD). On the 26th April 2020, members were also subject to a push-back from North Macedonia to Greece (**recorded in this report**).

11/04/2020

## “SIX OF THEM GET BEAT OF THE POLICE”

**Date and time:** April 11, 2020 00:06

**Location:** In the region of Gevgelija, along the Vardar River

**Coordinates:** 41.1400491, 22.5491341

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 23-53 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other)

**Police involved:** Approximately 12 male officers, three of which were described as ‘cagol’, wearing black clothes and masks. The remaining nine officers consisted of some who were wearing N. Macedonian police uniforms with masks, and others who were wearing camouflaged clothes but no masks. Three police cars (that looked like Nissans) and one blue van.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team, Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On Saturday 11th April 2020, at around 06:00, a transit group encountered approximately 12 authorities whilst walking along the Vardar River, in the region of Geveglja (MNK). Three of the officers were described as ‘cagol’, dressed in black with their faces covered by masks. The other officers were either also masked and wearing police uniforms or were dressed in camouflage and unmasked. Upon confrontation the transit group, comprised of nine Moroccan men between the ages of 23-53, attempted to run away.

### “six of them get beat of the police and caught”

The respondent described how three of the group-members managed to escape whilst the officers beat the remaining members of the group with batons all over their bodies. The respondent described being beaten so badly that he was unable to walk properly.

*Image of respondent's bandaged foot after treatment from a medical volunteer in Thessaloniki*

After the incident, the officers placed the transit group in a blue van and drove them approximately 15 minutes to what the respondent describes as being near the official border crossing of Borogoditsa (MNK). The officers then released the transit group by opening the “door” of the border (gate in the fence) for the group to cross. The respondent said that as it was early in the morning there was not many border guards around, which he insisted, enabled the transit group to avoid interacting with any Greek authorities. During the push-back, the officers did not offer access to a translator, medical assistance, or take note any of the transit groups’ details, nor did any member of the transit group request asylum.

Once in Greece, the transit group decided to travel back to Thessaloniki (GRK) by train. The following day, the respondent was treated by a volunteer from Medical Volunteers International who provided him with crutches to prevent further damage to his foot.

03/04/2020

## “PUSHED BACK FROM A CAMP IN SERBIA TO N. MACEDONIA, AND THEN TO GREECE”

**Date and time:** April 3, 2020 23:00

**Location:** Border of SRB/MNK close to Lojane

**Coordinates:** 42.24787806509264, 21.655677273632914

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia, Serbia

**Pushback to:** Greece, North Macedonia

**Demographics:** 16 person(s), age: 17 - 40+ , from: Iran, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), threatening with guns, forcing to undress, confinement in overcrowded conditions

**Police involved:** Masked Serbian authorities dressed in black coats, green khaki trousers with holstered pistols, multiple vehicles (jeeps), one police van, Macedonian police with a van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The group concerned in this incident were 15 men and one minor (aged 17). The group came from Algeria, Morocco and one person from Iran. The people had been residents in Tutin camp (SRB) for some time when the pushback occurred. One respondent from Morocco said he had been in the camp for four months, another said he had been in Serbia for eight months.

#### “We all have document”

All of them had camp cards issued to them in Tutin, and were therefore registered residents in the centre.

At the time of the incident, one respondent – a man in his 40s from Morocco – was due an operation for an injury he had sustained from a police beating inside Romania. He had been pushed back from Romania several months before and suffered severe impact injuries to his skull (as seen in the xray and medical note below). The respondent said that on the date of this latest incident, he had been told by camp officials that he would be getting an operation the following day to treat the injury.

The respondents shared that on 3rd April 2020, at around midday, a large number of Serbian police officers dressed in black tops, green trousers and carrying guns entered Tutin camp in cars/jeeps. The respondents say that the officers came to the main square of the camp and

ordered camp residents to exit the buildings where they were staying. Describing the authorities attire, one respondent shared how the officers were dressed:

### ***“black... big... ready to beat us”***

The officers reportedly had a list of the residents given by the camp officials. The respondents suggest the initiative was lead by one of the camp directors known as “*Maria*”. They also states they were aware of a civil clothes police officer named “*Sacha*”, who was also noted to be organising this role call.

The respondents described being inside their sleeping area (dormitory) when the authorities arrived and began calling people out into the the yard. The officers stated peoples full names and summoned them forwards. Each person called forward was ordered to remove jackets or over coats and then fully searched in a pat down method (legs, arms, torso) which the respondents presumed was to find any knives or sharp objects. The pat down was carried out by officers wearing gloves.

The group of 16, alongside some other residents of the camp, were informed that they were going to be transferred to the camp in Prescevo as a measure related to COVID-19 prevention. Several people asked the officers if they could go inside their domitory in order to gather their clothing and possessions, but the police officers denied them this.

### ***“They say ‘you are going in new camp”***

The sixteen people referred to in this case were placed into a van by the Serbian Special Forces at approximately 14:00. The conditions inside the van were extremely cramped and they were forced to stand, or sit on top of one another. Describing the journey towards Prescevo one respondent shared the fact that their was no stop made by the van and “no water, no toilet”. The van drove for a reported nine hours, stopping at points, but never allowing the transit group to disembark. At 23:00 at night, the van stopped and the transit group describe how:

### ***“we find ourselves in the border”***

Rather than taking them to the camp in Prescevo as stated, the authorities brought them to a remote area of hills and ordered them to cross into North Macedonia. The Serbian officers pointed guns at them and told them to leave:

### ***“they say ‘go go’ with their guns”***

The respondent said that some officers struck members of the group with fists, or shoved them, and that the group had to run in order to avoid being hit/punched. The man with the existing head injury felt feint and passed out after running from the officers. After stopping, the group identified that they had been pushed back into North Macedonia close to the town of Lojane.

The group accessed help in a mosque the following day (4th April 2020) and sheltered inside some abandoned buildings close to Lojane. During the following eight days the respondents allege that they tried to re-enter Serbia on four different occasions, but were pushed back with violence by Serbian police, who discovered them on foot within a short distance of the border and returned them by vans to the border with MNK where they used physical violence and on one occasion told the group:

### ***“Don’t come again, we will kill you”***

The respondent described the situation as very dire inside the abandoned building they used as shelter, asserting they lacked “water, food and toilets”. On the 12th April 2020, North Macedonian police came to the building in the early morning and found some of the group there. The police took the eight people present, recording their names and details, before loading them into a police van and stating they would be taken to a camp. The transit group found that there were already six other people detained in the back of the van (from a separate capture carried out by the officers).

Rather than driving to a camp, the group were taken directly to the Greek border (which they arrived at around midday). At the border the North Macedonian police forced the group to cross back into Greece. The respondent said that they slept one night in some improvised shelter, before finding a train line which was going to Thessaloniki (suggesting they were pushed back close to Gevgelija, MNK). The group boarded a train and arrived in Thessaloniki on 14th April 2020, where they were forced to reside in abandoned buildings because they asserted being scared of the police and of the risk of being pushed back further into Turkey.

**25/02/2020**

## ““THEY TOOK OUR JACKETS SO IT WOULD HURT MORE””

**Date and time:** February 25, 2020 12:00

**Location:** Near Beba Veche, Romania

**Coordinates:** 46.114998194417744, 20.284695827807244

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 6 men person(s), age: 16 - 35 , from: Morocco, Algeria, Sudan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 5

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 25th February 2020 six men attempted to cross the Serbian border into Romania. The group was composed of a sixteen-year-old boy, and another five men between 28 and 35 years old. They came from Morocco, Sudan and Algeria. They left from a village in Serbia from where they started to walk at 05.00 and after seven hours, they reached the border with Romania. The respondent said that the group arrived there at 12.00 in an area of open fields.

**“We saw on the map that we crossed the border, but there were no fences that could help us to recognize it”.**

The transit group decided to proceed during the day because at night they alleged there are a lot of drones that monitor the territory near the border, and that increases significantly the chances of being discovered.

The group was walking in the direction of the city of Timisoara (ROM), but they were seen by a local man who stopped them and called the police. The group waited for around three hours, when two Romanian police regular cars arrived. There were five police officers, described as wearing blue uniforms, all men. One of them had his face covered because he was wearing a black balaclava.

The police officers didn't say anything other than force the transit group members down to the floor in order to search their bodies for personal belongings. Phones, money (around 6/700 EUR all) and bags full of clothes and food were taken and never returned.

***“It’s a common thing that police steal money from us, in every place and every day”.***

In addition to seizing all personal belongings, the police made a video on their phones asking the the respondent and others to show their phone password.

***“They did it to save it and to use it later, we don’t know what they did with our phones”.***

Always in the same place, they were all forced to take off their jackets and to turn them over, and after that Romanian police officers started to beat them with batons, leaving on men's body visible injuries. After the question regarding where they were beaten, he said: *“Arms, back, legs, stomach, everywhere”.*

***“They took our jackets so it will hurt more”***

All the people expressed their intention to apply for asylum in Romania, but it was denied. The group was ushered into one car, and the condition inside was very cramped. For this reason, there was not enough space for everyone, and the drive was described as horrible. The officer was driving very fast and in a very reckless way, for more than an hour.

The entire group had not been brought to any police station, but directly back to the Serbian/Romanian border, where they were met by Serbian police officers who proceeded to search the group again for money. (According to the respondent, two of the men who were in this group already tried to cross this border one month before, and when they were pushed back, Romanian police said to them *“You give me 100 EUR or you will go 10 days in prison”.*)

Once the group was left at the Serbian/Romanian border, they walked for an hour to the nearest village in north eastern Serbia and then returned back with a taxi to Principovac Camp on the western side of the country.

21/02/2020

## “TWO FAMILIES PUSHED BACK FROM ROMANIA”

**Date and time:** February 21, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Kikinda

**Coordinates:** 45.94679845755511, 20.485306751258463

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 1-50 , from: Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, electric shock, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 8 Romanian officers in blue, 4 police cars, 4 officers in camo, 1 police van

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

In the late evening hours of February 21st 2020 a group of eight persons from Iraq made their way across the Serbian/Romanian border. The group consisted of two families. The first family consisted of a mother, father, two daughters, and one son. The second family consisted of a father, a mother, and one eleventh month old child.

The group entered into Romania near the city of Kikinda (SRB) at around 10:00 on February 21st and walked for approximately four hours over a distance of close to 5 km until they were stopped by Romanian authorities wearing blue uniforms at around 2:00 am on February 22nd. Four police cars (with two officers inside of each car) surrounded the group, pointing lights in their direction and shouting at them not to move. The respondent recalled that these officers called on their radio to some other people.

Shortly thereafter, a van arrived with five officers dressed in military camouflage, each one of whom had their faces covered with black ski masks. One of the camouflaged officers approached the families (the other four remained next to the van) and aggressively demanded for their belongings. Accordingly, the families gave up all of the money they had in their possession (the family of five had 400 EUR while the other had 200 EUR). The officer also asked the group for their mobile phones, which were then broken on the ground, using batons. Then, this officer patted down each of the group members in a way that was described by the respondent as rough and aggressive, including the four women. The families were then pushed in the van, and during the entire way back to the border they were exposed to extreme cold temperature, with the respondent describing that the vehicle's air conditioning had been turned on).

Once they reached the border, which was a short drive away, the families were pushed out of the van and ushered back to Serbian territory while being struck by batons on their bodies. The officers were described as using an electric device to shock the two fathers during the push-back: one of them was holding his 11 months child in his arms.

The group were returned to the Serbian side of the border and collected themselves before returning to Kikinda (SRB).

17/02/2020

## “WE FELT CRIMINALS' REGARDING A ROMANIAN DETENTION CENTER”

**Date and time:** February 17, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Stopped near Arad, Romania

**Coordinates:** 46.182618680927696, 21.287436501093516

**Pushback from:** Romania

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 27 person(s), age: 7 months - 41 years old , from: Iran, Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, psychological violence

**Police involved:** 9 police officers in blue uniform with 2 cars, 1 jeep, 1 van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

### ORIGINAL REPORT

In the late evening hours between the 17th and 18th of February, a group of 27 people attempted to move across the Serbian/Romanian border close to Kikinda (SRB). The group was divided in two sub-groups: one was composed of 17 people while the other group was comprised of 10. The group came from Syria, Iraq and Iran: there were seven women (two of whom were pregnant), five minors (a seven month old, a two-year-old, two seventeen-year-olds, and one sixteen-years-old) and fifteen men.

The two groups entered Romania at around 23:00, through two different locations. The group of ten was caught and detained by Romanian police after only a short walk into the territory. Meanwhile the other group managed to transit further into the interior of the country. After two days of walking, on the morning of February 19<sup>th</sup>, they arrived to what was likely the city of Arad. The remaining group of seventeen people consisted of six women (two of whom were three and seven months pregnant), four minors (the seven month old, the two seventeen-year-olds, and the sixteen-years-old) and seven men (the oldest one of forty-one years old).

At this point, they decided to wait until 20:00 to start walking again until, after a while, they arrived at around 50 meters away from the Romanian/Hungarian border – “we could see it”. The respondent remarked that they could see something like a set of “yellow rocks”, which delineated the border between the two countries, in the middle of the fields.

Suddenly, a Romanian police car arrived, from which three officers came out pointing flashlights, shouting at the group not to move and to get down. According to the respondent, the group has been discovered through infrared binoculars. They obeyed without resistance and waited on the ground for ten minutes. After that, three vehicles – a car, a jeep-style car, and a van – with two police officers inside of each of them arrived. All officers were described as wearing blue uniforms. The group were then ushered into the van and the jeep (eight and nine within the two vehicles) but as there were not enough room for everyone, five of them were put in the trunks (two in the van and three in the jeep). After thirty minutes driving, they were taken to a nearby police station.

Once there, they were divided by gender and asked for their belongings: bags, mobile phones and money (around 200 EUR between each adult). Furthermore, they were patted down and their pictures and finger prints were taken. They had to sign several papers without knowing the meaning. There was a translator but he did not translate the documents and just shouted “You must sign”, threatening to beat them if they did not comply. Indeed, two of them were beaten with batons because they refused to sign.

The group expressed an intention to apply for asylum in Romania, but were denied this wish. Then, they were all placed in a “long” and locked room (described as a space with three layers of walls: one made of transparent glass, one obscured glass and the last made of iron). Because of this security system, the room seemed very dark. During their time in this room (around two day), they did not have access to food and medical care, although the pregnant women and two men who were beaten required medical assistance. Besides, six new people were also placed into the same room. They could only drink water from the small sink that was inside, next to the toilet.

The hygienic conditions were also described as very bad and there was a lack of any privacy. They receive no kind of information during all the time, just papers to sign, which the respondent described as “too much to remember”. In the end he described having to sign around ten different papers. At around, 20:00 on February 21<sup>st</sup> their bags, phones, and money were returned and the group was taken to another police station, where they arrived, being transported in a big van and a small one, after an hour driving.

In this second police station they encountered the same procedure (pictures, finger prints, asked for their belongings, including rings and necklaces). They waited there from 21:00 until 5:00 on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, signing other documents (at around midnight), this time without any translators. After this, the officers returned their belongings and told them that they would be taken to the nearest camp. Once there, they noticed that this “camp” really looked like a prison. Here, they had to give for the third time finger prints, besides their personal effects. They were detained here for next six days.

They were divided into different cells, around 4 to 5 people each (families remained together). “The camp was composed by three floors, we could hear voices of other people but we couldn’t see them. We met a person that was there since six months, and he doesn’t know why”. During their detainment, the two pregnant women were denied the possibility to receive medical assistance. The oldest man – 41 years old – needed his medicine, which had been confiscated and never returned during these six days.

They received three meals per days, small portions of bad food. The respondent remarked about his impression that there was the chemical camphor inside the food. After several

attempts by the group to receive information about the nature of their detention, the security personnel repeatedly answered:

***“You eat the food and you will talk to the manager of the camp”***

***“We feel like criminals”.***

On the sixth day (February 27<sup>th</sup>), one of the pregnant women fainted. The respondent did not know if this was the reason, but after that the entire group of 27 was released (the other original group of 10 who were caught first at the Serbian/Romanian border were also taken to this camp). Their bags, mobile phones and money were returned, and they also received a bottle of water and chocolate, but with the recommendation not to eat it immediately as a marker that this was all they would receive.

Then, they were asked to sign other documents, but the entire group refused to do it. Then, police decided to sign the paper themselves. This paper, with fake signature, was a prohibition to come back to Romania for the next year and a half.

A bus with three Romanian police officers took them (and other 10 people) to the Serbian border, close to the city of Kikinda, in order to turn them over to the Serbian police. Here they were asked to pay a 50 EUR fee for trying to cross the border, with fifteen days of imprisonment in case of refusal.

After the payment, the group split up and walked back.

**27/01/2020**

**“WE ARE FROM CZECH. WE HATE IMMIGRANTS. SO, IF YOU COME AGAIN, WE ARE GOING TO BEAT YOU. STOP COMING HERE.”**

**Date and time:** January 27, 2020 18:45

**Location:** Gevgelija, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.13038975823413, 22.551526698181604

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 50-55 person(s), age: 18-32 years old , from: Afghanistan, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting

**Police involved:** Czech police with the Czech flag sewn on to the shoulders of their uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present, forced to pay fee

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent in this case had attempted to cross the Greece-N. Macedonia border five times in the space of a week, suffering multiple pushbacks. The respondent describes the push-back that occurred on one of these occasions (27/28th of January) from N. Macedonia to Greece.

The respondent was travelling from the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki by train (10-12 carriages), arriving in the border town of Gevgelija, N. Macedonia. The train left Thessaloniki at approximately 17:00 on the 27th January 2020 and arrived at Gevgelija station at around 18:45. The respondent was travelling in a transit group consisting of Moroccan and Afghani men, including his friend who was 32 years of age. The group was comprised of approximately 50-55 people ranging from the ages of 18-32 years of age.

On arrival, the police chased a group of people, including the respondent, over a fence and into a small forested area. The police caught the group that was attempting to escape using search lights (it was dusk) and proceeded to beat them. The respondent explains that there were nine police officers – seven men and two women. The respondent recounts the police saying:

***“Get down. Get down on your knees now.”***

***“We are from Czech. We hate immigrants. So, if you come again, we are going to beat you. Stop coming here.”***

The respondent explains that the police beat him with flashlights and kicked the men in the back and knees. The respondent explains that his friend was so heavily beaten that he ‘almost lost his eye’.

***“They beat us... Maybe they are going to kill you. Our friend almost lost his eye (from the physical violence carried out by the police officers). They are violent. They don’t respect immigrants.”***

The police searched the respondent’s phone – going through his photos and maps. The police officers brought the transit group to a small police station where they took the respondent’s fingerprint and asked for his name, age and city that he traveled from. The respondent describes the police station as small, with two/three compartments. The officers also took photos of the men in the transit group, including the respondent. The transit group were not offered any translator or any medical assistance for their injuries despite the beatings. The respondent did not ask for asylum.

***“They take us to the police station to take our fingerprint, ask where we are from and how we came to Macedonia – so they can close the border. But we, the immigrants, don’t tell them because it is the only way to get inside of here (N. Macedonia).”***

The respondent was kept in the police station for approximately two hours and then was taken back to the N. Macedonia-Greece border. The respondent explains that they were taken to an entrance on the border and were told by the Czech police officers to cross to Greece. The respondent was threatened to never return. Once on Greek land, the respondent was transported to the Greek village of Chamilo (see map below).

The respondent attempted to re-cross the border the following day. He explained that it was a similar sequence of events, however as the respondent did not attempt to run away, the respondent alleges he was not beaten by police. He was taken to the police station where the officers took his fingerprint and personal details. The respondent was returned to the N. Macedonia-Greece border as in the previous attempts and pushed back to Greece where Greek police officers brought him to the nearest village. Every time, the respondent had to buy bus tickets to return to the Greek city of Thessaloniki.

11/01/2020

## **“THE POLICE CAME WITH THREE MUZZLED DOGS”**

**Date and time:** January 11, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Bogdanci, MNK

**Coordinates:** 41.20339127603159, 22.574721776594977

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 64 person(s), age: Respondents aged 20-35 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Unknown number of officer - uniform with Czech flags sewn in and "POLIZI" written on them. Three muzzled dogs

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, forced to pay fee

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

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On Saturday the 11th of January 2020, three respondents attempted to cross the Greece-Macedonia border in a transit group of 64 persons. The three Moroccan men aged 22yrs, 27yrs

and 29yrs old had been pushed back the previous day in a transit group of 107 people, including two women. This previous episode is recorded in a report from 10th January 2020 ([read here](#)).

The respondents went by train from Thessaloniki (GRK) to N. Macedonia where they were stopped by police. The respondents explain that the course of events were similar to the previous pushback the day before: the police caught them, beat them with batons all over their body and stole their money/possessions.

However, this time the police came with three muzzled dogs. The respondents explain that the police officers were wearing uniform with Czech flags sewn in and "POLIZI" written on them. The respondents were taken to a camp in Bogdanci, a town in Macedonia near to the border, where the officers took down their names and details.

The respondents asked for asylum, but the officers informed the respondents that there were no asylum options available and deportation was charged at a fee of 500 euros. There was a Syrian translator in this camp to assist with the conversation. Once the respondents returned across the N. Macedonia-Greek border, a Greek police car stopped them and took them from the border to the Greek town, Polykastro. The respondents were instructed to buy a bus ticket for 6six euros to get back to the Northern Greek city of Thessaloniki.

10/01/2020

## ""THEY TOOK HIS MONEY, HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO COMPLETE THE WAY NOW WITHOUT MONEY""

**Date and time:** January 10, 2020 00:20

**Location:** Gevgelija, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.14154623745461, 22.51304441877798

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 107 person(s), age: 20-35 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Officers wearing uniform that read 'POLIZI' and had Czech flags on the arms

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On Friday, the 10th of January 2020, the respondents attempted to cross the Greece-Macedonia border in a transit group of 107 people. The respondents were three Moroccan men aged 22yrs, 27yrs and 29yrs old. The transit group crossed the Greece-Macedonia border by train, travelling from Thessaloniki, Greece.

The transit group of 107 people comprised of Algerian, Syrian, Pakistani, Palestinian and Afghan people ranging from the ages of 20-35yrs old. There were two women in the transit group from Palestine and Syria. At around 20:00 in the evening, the transit group were stopped by approximately 30-40 police officers when the train arrived in Macedonia (close to the town of Gevgelija).

The police officers were wearing uniform that read 'POLIZI' and had Czech flags on the arms. The respondent recounts the presence of many large police cars as well. The police officers beat the transit group using batons. The respondents explain that they were beaten with batons all over their body. The respondents' bags were taken by the officers and were threatened with more beating if the group did not leave.

One of the respondents explains that the officers also stole 100 euros from his friend. The officers asked the respondents for their identification papers to which they responded that they did not have any. The respondents explain that the police officers took their cigarettes and lighters as well. The respondents were returned to Greece the same.

**26/09/2019**

## **"I SAID JUST LEAVE ME TO DIE HERE, WHATEVER, I DON'T CARE ANY MORE"**

**Date and time:** September 26, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Nearby Gevgelija train station

**Coordinates:** 41.14342374685534, 22.51272508287491

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 21-23 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), threatening with guns, dog attacks

**Police involved:** Officers wearing civilian clothes; North Macedonian police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken

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

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondents, aged 21 and 23 years old, both from Morocco, began their journey on the 26th September 2019. They boarded a train from Thessaloniki and crossed the Greek-North Macedonian border. In North Macedonia, shortly after passing Gevgelija train station, the respondents were stopped in an abandoned train station where they were apprehended by police.

The respondents described these police officers as wearing civilian clothes, not uniforms. They recounted how some people who had been apprehended on the train attempted to run, but

were chased. The officers informed the respondents that nothing would happen to them, and that they would be sent to a camp in Serbia.

***“They were wearing shorts and flip flops at the time when they stopped us and one of them was really drunk and they were smoking.”***

One of the officers threatened to hit the two respondents with a stick, but was dissuaded by the others and sent to chase those who ran away and beat them instead.

The respondents were put in a closed car and were unable to see where they were being taken. Eventually they reached a police station, but both respondents were unsure of the location. They were then fingerprinted, photographed, placed in a car, and taken back to the Greek-North Macedonia border. Before the officers left the group at the border, they hit them with their fists.

The two respondents then made their way back to an abandoned train station where they paused for a rest and some food. Again, a police car approached them, the officers in the car were described by the respondents as wearing dark blue shirts, black trousers, and badges with the Macedonian flag on their shoulders. Shortly after the car arrived the officers from the vehicle released four dogs on the respondents. At first they attempted to run, but quickly saw this would be impossible.

***“At that point we couldn’t run anymore so we stood around each other in order to keep the dogs away from us and they were running around us in circles.”***

One of the respondents was dragged away from the group by the dogs after being bitten on the thigh. The other respondent attempted to hit the dog with a stick to distract it from attacking his friend. The dog reacted by then biting the second respondent.

***‘As that dog bit me, I felt as though there was a knife going into my thigh and I felt his fangs crushing and entering my flesh...The strangest thing I saw was that the dog owner was just watching the dog bite me as though it was some enjoyable thing to watch’***

The officers, watching this, released another two dogs on the respondents. By this point, the respondent describes begging the owner, saying *“please please get the dog away from me”*. Once the dogs were recalled, one of the officers approached and hit the respondent who had beaten the dog. He hit him three times with his fist, until the respondent was unconscious. The officer repeatedly asked the respondent why he had hit the dog.

The respondents described the scene, saying there was blood everywhere and one of the respondents was crying, believing he had lost his leg. They were put in a van and driven to a

point “in the middle of nowhere”, where the officers left them on the side of the road, telling them to follow the road until they reached Thessaloniki.

*“We were in the middle of nowhere, we were in the dark, we had no idea what to do.”*

Eventually another police car passed the respondents. The respondents waved them down but the police simply checked their papers and left, telling them to follow the road to Thessaloniki. At this point, the respondents decided to begin walking.

*“My friend was crying all this time as he didn’t know if we would survive this or not. And I said ‘just leave me to die here whatever, I don’t even care at this point’. But he said no and dragged me and made me stand”*

Eventually the respondents reached a small village where some local people treated them with alcohol and Betadine, and called an ambulance. In the hospital in Thessaloniki, the respondents were asked for money to treat their wounds. As they had nothing to pay with, the hospital staff simply cleaned the wounds, bandaged them, and told the respondents to leave.

08/09/2019

## “NOTHING, THEY LEFT ME WITH NOTHING”

**Date and time:** September 8, 2019 00:00

**Location:** 10km into North Macedonian interior (north of Gevgelija)

**Coordinates:** 41.20541511133554, 22.448350559393134

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 17-55 years old , from: Palestine, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, electric shock, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Frontex officers, police wearing balaclavas

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The transit group began their journey in order to cross the Greek-North Macedonian border on the 8th of September 2019. The group consisted of six people, one Palestinian, two Moroccans and three Algerians, ranging from the ages of 17 years old to 55 years old. The youngest person

was from Palestine and the oldest was from Algeria. The respondent was also from Algeria. The transit group began their journey from Thessaloniki (GRK) where they boarded a train travelling north towards the border

The transit group disembarked and walked for two hours to reach the border, upon crossing the border and entering North Macedonian territory they continued to walk for approximately two more hours into the interior. The place marked on the map is an approximate location, the exact location being unknown.

The respondent explains that the group was walking at night (late evening on 8th September 2019) when nine officers discovered them and shouted 'Stop! Stop!' at the men. The respondent explains that he knew they were not the Greek police force as they were not speaking the Greek language. The police officers were on foot and are alleged to have found the transit group with the aid of night vision cameras.

***"They use the cameras, so they can follow you when you walk. They follow you."***

The respondent explains that when the officers shouted "Stop!", the two Moroccan men and the young Palestinian boy fled and escaped capture by the police. The three men from Algeria did not run. The respondent had a foot injury so was unable to flee. The police already had a man detained with them, somebody already from another transit group discovered elsewhere on the same night. The transit group now consisted of four men.

The respondent had no formal identification documents with him, however the other three men had passports and 'cartia' documents issued in Greece. The police separated the men who had identification papers from the respondent and took them away. The respondent was then left alone with the police and was not told where the others were being taken to.

***"That's why when the police shouted 'Stop! Stop!', I stopped. Most people have told me: 'If they stop you, don't run. If you do, they will treat you with the bad way'. But even when I didn't run, they still treat me in a bad way. It's the same."***

The police officers checked the respondent's pockets and found 500 euros, which they took along with his bag that contained his clothes and food. The police beat the respondent using batons and kicked him. They used an electric taser to shock the respondent as well. The respondent alleges that the officers were wearing Frontex uniforms and explains that some of them were wearing balaclavas. He explains that if you looked at the officers faces who were not wearing the balaclavas, they would push his head down and hit him. After this, the police officers took the respondent to the border and pushed him back to Greece.

***"They take me to the borders and said, 'go outside, go to the Greece again'. Nothing, they left me with nothing. They took even the cigarettes, phone, money, clothes,***

***food. Everything. Even the card that I have to get free food from a charity in Greece. They take it. They left nothing.”***

The respondent walked from the border, into Greek land, for seven hours where he found a bus station. The respondent explains that he found a Greek police woman who gave him food, cigarettes and money. There was another group that was at the bus station as they had also been stopped by police. They gave the respondent money to buy a bus ticket back to Thessaloniki.

**04/08/2019**

**“AT THE POLICE STATION, THE POLICEMEN TOOK FINGERPRINTS AND PHOTOS OF THE RESPONDENT AND, USING AN INTERPRETER FROM JORDAN, ASKED ABOUT HIS INFORMATION. HE WAS TOLD TO RETURN BACK TO THESSALONIKI.”**

**Date and time:** August 4, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Gevgelija Train Station, Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.144165, 22.511828

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 30+ person(s), age: respondent 45 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Macedonian police (undisclosed number) and Macedonian army (2 officers)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team, Philoxenia

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent, aged 45 and from Algeria, attempted to travel to North Macedonia alone on the 3rd of August 2019. The respondent took the train from Thessaloniki, Greece to the border of North Macedonia. The respondent recounts how there were approximately 20-30 people that he thought to be from Pakistan who were also on the train he took. Arriving near to the border of Greece with North Macedonia, the respondent walked on foot along with this group and several others.

The respondent walked along with three Afghani men at the back of the group. As the group entered North Macedonia, they paused and waited for further transit by train to Serbia. The group of men waited for the train, however the train did not arrive when expected.

The respondent explains that they waited at a train station till the next day (4th August 2019) when a train arrived at approximately 04:00. However, this was not a passenger train, but rather a train composed of shipping containers, so the men were unable to board the train. Together with the Afghani men, the respondent decided to walk to Gevgelija train station, in order to continue his journey.

The respondent recounts that as the transit group entered the train station, they saw two Macedonian army officers and the Afghani people ran away. The respondent was left at the train station where he was discovered by one army officer. One of the other officers chased after the three Afghani men. Meanwhile the remaining army officer asked the respondent for his information, his phone and money. The officer searched the respondent and his belongings. The officer did not take his money as it was only 10 euros and the respondent did not have a phone to give.

The respondent was arrested along with a transit group from Bangladesh that were also trying to cross the border at this train station. The group was handed over by the army to the North Macedonian police. The respondent explains that the North Macedonian police were wearing dark blue uniforms, however as it was the respondents first time in North Macedonia he was not sure about the details of the clothing or the attire of the police officers.

The transit group were taken to a police station where the police officers took fingerprints and photos of the respondent and, using an interpreter from Jordan, asked about his information. He was told to return back to Thessaloniki, Greece. The respondent tried to ask for a car or a truck that would take him back to Greece, however, he managed to board a train back to Thessaloniki train station. The respondent did not ask for asylum whilst he was in Macedonia and explains that there were no beatings or violence. However, the respondent did stress that the officers seemed 'disgusted' with him.

**28/07/2019**

## **“BOSNIA PEOPLE ARE GOOD, BUT BOSNIA POLICE ARE BIG PROBLEM”**

**Date and time:** July 28, 2019 02:00

**Location:** Gornji Šepak, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 44.5538697, 19.162012600000025

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 16-35 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** threatening with guns, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 Bosnian police officers; 2 police vans

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On July 28, a group of 20 people from Afghanistan, including two individuals under the age of 18 years old, departed from Loznica (SRB) and began their transit attempt to enter Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The took a boat across the Drina River around midnight on July 28 and then walked for two hours inside the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Around 2:00AM, near the village of Gornji Šepak (BiH), the respondent reported that they were spotted by two male police officers described as wearing dark blue uniforms. He states that the police pointed a gun at the group members and shouted "stop." Everyone in the group followed the order.

The police then demanded that everyone hand over their mobile phones and the respondent reported that the police smashed the phones on the ground to break them.

The group members waited with these two officers for five minutes and then a second police van described as holding two more male officers arrived at the scene.

The police ordered the 20 individuals inside the van and the police drove the group for around 20 minutes back to the Serbian border. The police brought the group to the Šepak bridge border crossing and shouted "go."

The group members crossed the bridge and slept in the forest in Serbia for one night. The following night they attempted to enter Bosnia and Herzegovina again and they successfully entered the country and reached Sarajevo the following day.

*"Bosnia people are good, but Bosnia police are big problem"*

**22/07/2019**

## "THEY TREATED ME LIKE A DOG"

**Date and time:** July 22, 2019 09:30

**Location:** Gevgelija, North Macedonia

**Coordinates:** 41.147494, 22.51097

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 1 person(s), age: 27, from: Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** Pressing the wounds of the respondent.

**Police involved:** 2 Macedonian Policemen, 1 police van.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, aged 27 and from Tunisia, started his journey from Thessaloniki (Greece) Railway Station on 21st July 2019. He took a freight train and jumped off at Edomini, Greece at approximately 00:00 that night. As a result of jumping, he suffered severe injuries. According to the respondent's personal experience and that of his friends who used the same train before, he felt that the drivers of the train deliberately speed up the train near the Greek – Macedonian border suspecting that some people travelling in the train might jump off to avoid detection.

The respondent then started walking towards North Macedonia and at night, he crossed the border from Greece and entered North Macedonia. Once entering the country, he walked to a railway station and slept there. It was here in the morning on 22nd July 2019, at around 09:30 he was caught by the authorities which the respondent termed as Macedonian police, since he saw Macedonian flags affixed to their uniform (approximate coordinates: 41.147494, 22.510977).

According to the respondent, the two policemen arrived in a police car and arrested him. He was ordered to walk from the point of apprehension until the police station (*see Figure 1*) in the injured condition for 15 minutes.

The respondent tried to explain to the police that he could not walk in this injured condition. Instead of listening to his plea, the policemen started pressing his wounds to force him to walk.

"They treated me like a dog"

*(Figure 2: injuries to the respondents leg that impeded walking)*

In the police station, the respondent was put behind bars in a room for one hour which he referred to as a "jail". He saw many people of different nationalities detained in the facility.

Afterwards, he was taken to a building near the Macedonian Greek border which respondent described as a camp with small rooms and each having an attached toilet as well. Over here, the respondent was asked to provide his personal data and fingerprints by a woman translator in civilian clothes. According to the respondent, the translator compelled him to get himself registered as an Egyptian, not as a Tunisian.

However, the respondent didn't succumb to this pressure and told her to register him as a Tunisian as he was from Tunisia. Since the translator spoke the respondent's language, he asked her for medical help since he had injuries but wasn't provided any kind of aid during his detention. The respondent also asked for food and water which wasn't provided to him. Afterwards, he was put behind the bars in a small room in the camp where he met people including children and women who were also being detained.

According to the respondent, soon a blue police van arrived with one policeman and he was put in it along with another man from Afghanistan. After 5 minutes driving, at around 14:30 (22nd July 2019) they were on the other side of the border in Greece.

13/07/2019

## “THEY WERE WEARING A DARK BLUE UNIFORM WITH FLAGS SEWN ON IT AND THEY WERE FROM MULTIPLE NATIONALITIES”

**Date and time:** July 13, 2019 00:00

**Location:** close to Gevgelija (North Macedonia)

**Coordinates:** 41.142141, 22.499994

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 24-26 (respondent aged 24) , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** Frontex officers (described in text as various nationalities), Greek police officers (station in Polykastro)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team, Philoxenia

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 13th of July 2019, the respondent attempted to cross the Greek – North Macedonia border with three other people. The group consisted of four men between the ages the ages of 24 and 26 years old.

The respondent attempted to cross into North Macedonia, however he shared that he was arrested by border control officers while in the process of crossing. When asked to describe the appearance of the officers, the respondent described that:

*“they were wearing a dark blue uniform with flags sewn on it and they were from multiple nationalities. I saw a Serbian, a Croatian/French and an Italian flags”.*

From the respondent description, it is apparent that the officers he was arrested by were part of Frontex forces.

The Frontex officers pushed the respondent back from North Macedonia to the Greek city of Polykastro, directly south from Gevgelija (North Macedonia). In Polykastro, Greek police officers demanded six euros per person to purchase train tickets back to Thessaloniki for the group of four. However, the respondent had no money so was unable to pay the officers. The group was then put in a prison cell for two hours, after which they were released in Polykastro.

The transit group then reattempted to cross the Greek – North Macedonia border, walking for 30km along train tracks from the Greek city of Polykastro to the North Macedonian city of Gevgelija. However, as the respondent had a wound on his toe he was unable to continue walking. At this point, the group was apprehended once again by Frontex officials. The Frontex officers took the transit group to a camp near the Macedonian city of Gevgelija. At this camp the officers took the group members names and fingerprints. The respondent explains that he asked for asylum in Macedonia, however the officers told him that he was unable to apply for asylum. After this, the group was pushed back again to Greek territory where the respondent took the train back to the Greek city of Thessaloniki. See map below (Figure 1) for plotted journey, including both pushback points.

*(Figure 1: Journey to border marked by black lines, pushback/return route marked by red lines)*

10/07/2019

## “OFFICERS RELEASED A DOG WHICH CAUGHT THE ESCAPING PERSON BY HIS LEG AND MADE HIM RETURN TO THE AUTHORITIES.”

**Date and time:** July 10, 2019 22:00

**Location:** 10km from Gevgelija, North Macedonia.

**Coordinates:** 41.125187, 22.435103

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** Initially group were 6, increasing to approx. 30 later in the incident person(s), age: 27, rest of the group 20-30 years old, from: Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** dog attacks

**Police involved:** 1 Macedonian policeman and 4 other officers with words written in Macedonian language on their uniforms.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent aged 27, a Syrian citizen, along with five other persons (two Egyptians, two Tunisians, and a Senegalese person) left on a freight train from the Thessaloniki (Greece) railway station to go to Serbia via North Macedonia. On 10th July 2019 at 12:20, the transit group was successful in boarding a train at the station.

On the same day, at around 13:40, the transit group jumped off the train before the train entered North Macedonia. According to the respondent, they did so because they knew there were three Macedonian police check posts ahead from where the train would have passed and where it would have been checked by the police. The group decided to cross around the police check posts and enter North Macedonia by foot. They carried on their journey by foot and managed to enter Macedonia without being detected. Using hilly tracks through the forest, they reached a rise in the land at approximately 22:00. While getting down from the hill, they saw a couple of tanks and three private cars with five persons. The respondent thinks that one of them was a Macedonian policeman and referred to the four other officers as "commandos".

When the transit group realized that they had been observed by the authorities, most decided not to run away, but one of the people from the group tried to escape. Noticing that, the officers released a dog on him which caught the escaping person from his leg, forcing him to return to the authorities. The respondent considered the spot of apprehension to have been some 10 kilometers away South West of Gevgelija (MKD).

After that, the transit group were taken to an unknown place in a police van which the respondent said felt like some 20 minutes away from the spot of apprehension. Upon their arrival to the place, they were put in a room until the following day (11th July 2019). In that room, 25 people (23 from India and 2 people from Syria) aged between 20 and 30 were already being held. The people told the respondent that they had been arrested an hour before them. During their detention, the transit group asked for food but were not provided any. Moreover, they also asked the police to let them go as they did not intend to seek asylum in North Macedonia. However, no heed was paid by the police to these requests.

After four hours, the police called a bus and then all the detainees, i.e. approximately 31 persons, were transported by this bus to another building. In that building, they were investigated by the authorities with the help of a translator. All their personal data including name, age and pictures of their eyes were taken. The same day, the officers called the bus again and the transit group was pushed back by the authorities onto the other side of the border from North Macedonia into Greece. According to the respondent the police opened the gate at the border fence and let them go.

The transit group of six managed to take the next freight train and arrived back to Thessaloniki, Greece from where they had left.

08/07/2019

## “HE DIDN’T CONTROL EVERYONE, HE CHOOSE PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THE APPEARANCE AND THE SKIN COLOR”

**Date and time:** July 8, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Goražde, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 43.665289, 18.969416

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 25 - 29 years old , from: Algeria, Sudan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** racial profiling

**Police involved:** 5 Bosnian police officers; one police van and one police car

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The following report is the third of three reports referring to the pushback of a group of two men from Algeria and one man from Sudan from Bosnia to Montenegro. The first report can be found [here](#) and the second report can be found [here](#).

The group members started on the July 8, 2019 at 11:00AM from Podgorica (MNE) to Pljivlja (MNE), where they arrived at 7:00PM. On the next day they started to walk towards Goražde (BiH). After they crossed the border and arrived in Goražde, they went to the bus station and bought a ticket for Sarajevo. But shortly after the bus started, the police stopped the bus and one officer went inside to control it. He didn't control everybody's passport, but the respondent described he picked out a few people to check their documents.

*“He didn't control everyone, he choose people because of the appearance and the skin color. When he asked people, he wanted to see the passport. When the police officer came to us, he also asked for our documents. We told him that we don't have any papers. Then he said that we are immigrants/refugees and ordered us to step out of the bus.”*

In total they forced fourteen people from Morocco, Algeria and Sudan outside of the bus. An additional five police officers were also involved in this control and waiting for them outside on the street. Then the Bosnian police officers put all fourteen people in a prisoner van and drove them to a police station, however the respondent does not know the location of the place where he was taken.

There, all of them were questioned about their name, surname, and nationality. They didn't take any fingerprints or photos, there was also no translator present. They also asked specific questions about smugglers and routes. The police did not take any of their group members' possessions.

Then the three group members and one person from Morocco were forced into a car and the Bosnian police drove them to the border crossing in Metaljka (BiH). From there they had to walk back to Pljevlja and took a bus back to Podgorica, being very tired and exhausted.

*“Now not only Croatian police is bad, also Bosnian police change. The problem is not if you are Muslim or not, the problem is the respect.”*

*“For example if somebody from Bosnia steals something, the police catch him and puts him to jail. Not everybody goes to jail. But if I want to go to Europe and I don’t want to steal, police catch me and put me in jail. Why is this?”*

**07/07/2019**

## **“SECOND TRY, SECOND PUSHBACK, SECOND TIME DETAINED IN THE CAGE”**

**Date and time:** July 7, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Border crossing Klobuk, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.712444, 18.549552

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 25-29 years old person(s), age: 25-29 years old , from: Algeria, Sudan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** insulting

**Police involved:** 3 Bosnian police officers, 2 with a uniform and one in civil clothes, 1 Montenegrin Officer

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water, inhumane detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The following report is the second report of three involving the same group members who were consecutively pushed back from Bosnia to Montenegro. **The first report is available here.** The pushback involved a group of men from Algeria and one Sudanese men.

The group members tried again on July 7, 2019 to transit towards Bileća (BiH), and arrived in Stolac. Once again, they tried to buy a bus ticket to Mostar (BiH). But at the station, one local person observed them and the respondent believed that they called the police because for racist reasons.

*“They looked at my friend from Sudan, because he has no white skin and said: ‘Police, police!’ A short time after, the police came.”*

Three Bosnian police officers came to the scene. Two were wearing Bosnian police uniforms and the respondent believed that there was a third officer wearing civilian clothes. These officers started to question them.

*"The police officers said: 'So you want to go to Sarajevo?' When I said yes, he said that when I give him the papers of Montenegro, he will take me to Mostar. But I know that they wanted to trick me, because when I give this paper to police, I go to jail."*

Then the police officers forced them into a car and drove them directly to the border crossing Klobuk (BiH). There again they spent a few hours in what the respondent described as a 'cage,' where they had sat in their previous transit attempt.

After that, a police officer from Montenegro came to them and asked them about if they have papers from Montenegro. When they said yes and that they were in a camp in Spuž, Montenegro, the police released them from the 'cage'. The Montenegrin police officer asked them if they have money, and when they said yes, he helped them to get on a bus to Podgorica.

*"The first time we gave the money to police and the police stole the money, so we waited long time in the cage. And the second time we spoke directly to the bus driver and we bought a ticket."*

**06/07/2019**

**"IF YOU GO BY CAR TO THAT BORDER CROSSING POINT OF BOSNIA, YOU SEE AT THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE STREET THIS CAGE. IT'S VERY SMALL AND I THINK ORIGINALLY FOR ANIMALS AND DOGS."**

**Date and time:** July 6, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Border crossing near Klobuk, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.712444, 18.549552

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 25-29 years old , from: Algeria, Sudan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 7 Bosnian police officers, one Toyota, one Volkswagen police vehicle

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The transit group went from Nikšić (ME) to Bileća (BiH), crossing the border on small mountain paths near the road border crossing. They then walked 28 km into the interior, to the town of Stolac (BiH).

After the transit group had crossed the border into BiH, they took a small hillside road in order to look down into Bileća and check if there were any Bosnian Police stationed near the bus terminal. When the group were sure there were no police they walked down into Bileća to buy a bus ticket to Mostar.

They paid the regular price of 7€ per ticket. However, after payment the ticket vendors then told the group members that they had to pay 40€ each for a ticket, or they would not be able to board the bus. The transit group did not have enough money and told the staff that they wanted the ticket or a refund. An argument followed, resulting in the ticket vendor keeping the transit groups money and calling the Bosnian Police.

*“He stole our money. We felt a lot of racism in this office, just because he saw the dark skin color of our friend, he wanted to make profit out of this and didn’t accept him. He said to us, that we can go but for this black man, he cannot give a ticket. Everyone tries to make profit out of refugees. But we didn’t want to leave our friend behind, so we went away, not buying the ticket.”*

After the staff of the bus station called the police. The respondent described the officers as four Bosnian Police, wearing polo shirts and blue uniforms with the Bosnian flag on the shoulder. The officers came and put the group members in handcuffs.

The officers told them that they should try crossing the border by another route, not via Bileća. Afterwards the four initial officers called the what the respondent believed was the Bosnian Border Police in order to carry out the pushback. The police put the transit group in a large car that the respondent described as a Toyota and drove them to a gas station in Trebinje (BiH). There, another car was waiting and the group members were forced by the Bosnian Police directly from one car into the other van, identified by the respondent as a Volkswagen. In this van, there were three Bosnian police that the respondent believes were border police officers wearing light blue shirts. The police drove them to the border crossing of Klobuk (BiH) and put them in a wire detention cell for three hours. The respondent described how the cell consisted of a wire cage made of steel and resembled a dog pound.

*“If you go by car to that border crossing point of Bosnia, you see at the right side of the street this cage.”*

After three hours the Bosnian Border Police asked the transit group if they had money and the three group members showed them what they had. They waited a another hour for the next bus to Montenegro, which had a Bosnian license plate and upon entry to the bus the Bosnian Police forced the transit group to pay for a ticket on this bus. The respondent described how they did not receive a regular ticket and he believed that they had to pay more than the normal price. The bus driver said he wanted 20€, and the respondent stated that the police witnessed how the transit group were sold overpriced travel without receipt.

*"I asked them, why we don't get a ticket. I said, they are a normal bus, they have to give us a ticket. But nothing."*

Afterwards they went back to Montenegro:

*"If you don't have any money and police bring you to this border crossing in Klobuk, you have to walk by foot all the way back."*

18/06/2019

## "PUSH-BACK AND 'CONFISCATION' DESPITE VOLUNTARY DEPARTURE"

**Date and time:** June 18, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Bileća, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.80785, 18.485324

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 32, 23, 23, 5, 6, 11, 34, 37 , from: Palestine, Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 5 Bosnian border police officers, possibly one officer in civilian clothes

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The report is about a group of eight people who were voluntarily returning to Montenegro from Bosnia on June 18. The group consisted of two Palestinian men from Syria, one man from Iraq, and one family of Syrian-Palestinians consisting of a husband, wife and three children.

The group was on their way back to Greece from Croatia and Bosnia after several unsuccessful attempts to reach a northern European country. The two young Syrian men were pushed back to Bihać by the Croatian police on the same day when they caught them at the train station in "Buzet" near the Slovenian border on the June 11. The family and the young Iraqi men also experienced illegal push-backs by the Croatian police in May 2019. Even though they expressed their request for asylum several times to the Croatian authorities, it was ignored by the Croatian police.

The whole group met in Bihać again on the June 13 and decided to go back to Greece together. The main reason for their decision was the need to recover from the attempts to cross Croatia and the hardships experienced during the push-backs committed by the Croatian police.

According to very harsh circumstances and conditions in the border regions in Northern Bosnia, they were scared to experience physical police violence openly on the streets in Bosnia.

*"The people from Bihać hate the refugees a lot. But I have also a hard situation at my home, I can't come back."*

They began their transit attempt back to Greece on June 18. In the center of Bileća (BiH) a civilian stopped his car as he passed the group on the street. He stopped the group and asked them where they want to go. They didn't want to speak to him and replied that they wanted to go to Montenegro. The men didn't believe them and said that he will help the group and call a friend that would bring them to Mostar (BiH). The respondent, however, believed that the man called the police. The respondent believed that this individual was a police in civilian clothes.

After ten minutes, five border police officers in black uniforms came to pick up all of the group up in two vans. They were brought to a point in the woods, and the police took almost all of their money. From there they walked seven hours until the group members called the Montenegrin police to help them, because they were starving and didn't have any more money to buy food. Two police officers arrived and said that they could only help them to call for a taxi that could bring them to Nikšić (MNE) for 50 €. The respondent explained to them, that they are not able to pay the 50€ because the Bosnian police took almost all of their money from them at the border. The Montenegrin police officers, who the respondent believed looked like border police, arranged a taxi which brought them for free to Nikšić.

14/06/2019

**"THEY ARE GOING TO DEPORT YOU THROUGH LEGAL CROSSING INSIDE THE LAND. IF THEY DON'T HAVE THIS, THEY JUST LET YOU OUT SOMEWHERE IN FOREST."**

**Date and time:** June 14, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Hum/šćepan Polje (road border Bosnia and Herzegovina/Montenegro)

**Coordinates:** 43.349073, 18.84462

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 8 person(s), age: 19-32 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 4 Bosnian police officers (SFA) using white VW and white Peugeot cars.

Undefined number of Montenegrin police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, denial of right to lawyer

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The following report is about a group of young men from Algeria and Morocco who were pushed back by the Bosnian police to Montenegro after prolonged detainment in a facility near Sarajevo. The respondent started his journey to Bosnia and Herzegovina in a group of four people, all men from Algeria, aged, 19, 26, 28, and 36 years old.

The group traveled from Podgorica (MNE) and transited through Bileća (BiH), before moving on to Mostar and Sarajevo. When they arrived in Sarajevo, they wanted to register for a police paper, which is what the Bosnian government issues to people-in-transit as an identification document. For that purpose, the group visited the "Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) Field Office in Ušivak, Hadžići (BiH) which is located inside the Refugee-Camp run by IOM. The camp in Ušivak, Hadžići is 20 km west from the centre of Sarajevo. All four group members entered the office on the 24th of May 2019 and received a paper with information in English. After receiving these info-papers, they were separated and went through the following procedure individually. In each case, the individual group members were processed by one employee, this person did the paperwork inside of the office, while one other person (identified as security staff) stood inside the container in which the process took place and performed the search of the individuals bags and personal belongings.

While the fingerprints of the interviewee were taken, the security staff searched the respondents phone. It was secured with a code, so the security staff ordered him to type in the code. In the beginning the respondent refused, because his privacy is very important to him. But the security staff threatened him that the procedures of all four group members would be discontinued and that none of them would receive a "Hartija" (Bosnian for "paper") if the respondent did not type in the code to unlock the phone.

*"I told the security man that this is not legal, he cannot ask me for the code! And I was sure that there was nothing in the phone that could make problems. My friends said, that I should just do it. So, finally I gave the code."*

The security staff searched his phone very thoroughly and found a picture of a Montenegrin paper, which the respondent had forgot was on the phone. Because of this document, the security staff instantly called the police.

Police officers arrived and transferred him to what the respondent described as "Closed Camp". The facility was identified as the detention prison 'Imigracioni Centar' located in the east of Sarajevo (<http://sps.gov.ba/imigracioni-centar/>). The police engaged in the transfer were two officers in dark-blue uniforms. Both were tall and wore glasses – and the respondent asserts they were most probably Bosnian police from the SFA. Inside this detention prison, run by the Bosnian SFA, the respondents fingerprints were taken again and all his personal belongings were taken away from him. The next step was to wait for two hours in a single person cell until he received a fresh blanket and was removed to another room.

Besides this two hour stay in a single cell, he stayed the remaining 22 days of his detention in a cell of 10 people with 5 beds (bunks with 2 layers). The food wasn't good and consisted mostly of old bread, that the respondent said tasted like it was already three days old. Inside the room

there was a separated part with a shower and a toilet. From his cell window he was able to see the car pool of the detention facility on the parking area. It consisted of:

*“5 cars for deportations, 1 black Volkswagen, 2 Renault Traffic in white, and 2 Peugeot in white.”*

The majority of the days he was detained, the respondent had to spend all 24 hours of the day inside of this cell. The respondent shared that this practice was introduced by the detention prison administration because of a person, who was able to escape during a yard exercise.

*“Only one officer who was Muslim opened the door of the corridor during his shifts.”*

One of his cellmates had already been detained for six months inside the prison. This person was part of a group of nine persons that had been imprisoned because of accusations relating to involvement in a fight in Velika Kladuša approximately six months before. This inmate shared that the fight had occurred between other groups present in the town and had not involved him or his friends. However, the day after the fight four Algerians, three Moroccans and two Egyptians were detained, having been found sleeping in an abandoned house in Velika Kladuša. Shortly after, they were transferred to Sarajevo and imprisoned in the detention facility there. They were accused of being part of said fight, which they state wasn't the case. The group had not been taken to any police station, neither had any evidence been put forward against them or due process carried out as per the legislated means for dealing with accusations of violent crime. They shared with the respondent how their group had simply been picked up at random after the fight took place, despite having nothing to do with it.

During his stay, the respondent was able to observe that there was a difference in duration of stay between people who were pushed back to Serbia, and people who were pushed back to Montenegro. He asserted that this originates from the fact that the Bosnian foreigners police is in contact with both responsible state authorities from Montenegro and Serbia to organize an “official” push-back.

*“Serbia and Montenegro also have to agree to take the people back. I have a lot of experience, with Turkey and Greece, they just let you out somewhere! The prison is in contact with them and when they have the confirmation to take the people back, they are going to deport you through legal crossing inside the land. If they don't have this, they just let you out somewhere in forest.”*

The respondent observed how prisoners who would be pushed back to Serbia, usually stayed a shorter amount of days and prisoners who would be pushed back to Montenegro usually stayed longer. His estimation was that this happens due to the varying level of agreements, communication and cooperation between the different governmental institutions.

*“Who has paper from Montenegro stays from 20 days to 1 month, who has paper from Serbia stays from 10 days to 20 days.”*

On the 14th of June 2019, the pushback from Sarajevo (BiH) to Plužine (Montenegro) took place. In the morning of that day, one of the guards opened the cell door and ordered the respondent to leave the cell in order to be deported. On the same day, there was a deportation due to take place from Bosnia to Serbia, with around ten persons. In total there were eight persons

deported to Montenegro, carried out by four police officers in two cars. The respondent knew the SFA officers already from the everyday life inside of the detention facility. They were the same SFA officers who worked as guards and who fulfilled the pushback operations when inmates were to be deported. The brand of the car in which the respondent was taken was a white Volkswagen. Inside the car there was a window dividing the front part, where two officers were sitting and the back part, where four detainees were sitting. The second car was a white Peugeot. The respondent received all his personal belongings back. But the respondent reported that one of the deported group, an Algerian man who had 1,500 € with him when he was arrested, only received 500 € back.

In Hum/šćepan Polje the eight deported former prisoners were transferred via the official border crossing point from BiH to MNE. The Bosnian officer who had driven the respondent handed out one paper per person, including four documents in total, to the Montenegrin officers at the border. Inside the border crossing point an exchange occurred whereby the eight persons were moved into cars with Montenegrin license plates. For every person the Bosnian officers handed two paper documents to the Montenegrin police officers who then brought the transit group from the border crossing point to Plužine.

*"They must have had some kind of agreement to let us pass, because they entered the Montenegrin land legally, normally."*

The group of eight were brought to a police station by the Montenegrin police in the village Plužine, where they were set free. There, the chief of the police station helped them by showing them the nearby bus station and even convinced the bus driver to let the respondent go for free.

**13/06/2019**

## **"GO JUNGLE, GO JUNGLE, TO MONTENEGRO!"**

**Date and time:** June 13, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Čajniče, Metaljka, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 43.533556, 19.147417

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 24, 27 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 6 officers from Republika Srpska, 2 in black uniforms, 4 in blue uniforms, 2 Montenegrin officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In the early morning of the 13th of June, two young men from Morocco, 24 and 27 years old rode in a bus to Čajniče (BiH). One of the other passengers called the police shortly before the final destination. The two group-members inferred that the phone call was meant to inform the police about them.

When they later exited the bus, they went to a supermarket to buy something to drink. When they came out, there was one Bosnian police officer waiting for them. The first thing the officer did was to take their phones. He did not even ask the two to hand the phones out to him, or spoke to them, he took both their phones with his hands from their pockets and put them into his own.

The Bosnian officer ordered a second car which came right after the call. In total, five police officers arrived in a large car, two of them wore black uniforms with guns, and three of them wore blue shirts and had a sign to regulate traffic. The respondent identified them as Serb, but the license plate of the car was Bosnian. Two of the officers stepped out of the car and ordered the interviewees to step into the car.

During the ride one of the respondents asked: "Where is my phone?" Other than laughs, he did not receive a response. Their phones were still with the first officer in front of the supermarket who did not join for the ride.

The two men were driven directly to the Bosnian/Montenegrin border. When they arrived there, the officers took pictures of them and accused them of being smugglers. Then the officers struck them two or three times with batons. Afterwards the officers said to them "Go Jungle, go Jungle, to Montenegro!"

They ordered them to take a road inside the forests, after 2 or 3 km they reached a larger road (R-3) and continued along that one. On this road they met Montenegrin police, who secured the border crossing point in Metaljka (MNE). The Montenegrin police asked them for their papers, money and phones. The two had none of these things and were ordered to go back to Bosnia.

So they went into the jungle again to avoid Montenegrin police. They were not able to navigate their way because they didn't had phones. Their walk from the border to Pljevlja lasted from 7:00 in the morning to 3:00 pm in the afternoon, 8 hours. *"This was very hard and exhausting."*

**06/06/2019**

## "HOW LONG I HAVE TO STAY IN THIS PRISON?"

**Date and time:** June 6, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Bosnian/Montenegrin border crossing Šćepan Polje

**Coordinates:** 43.348489, 18.846496

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 24, 27, 25, 29 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, insulting, theft of personal belongings

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of lawyer, denial of shower, denial of information about duration of detention

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The report is about a group of 3 men from Morocco, all men in the age of 24, 27, 29 and one man from Algeria, 28 years old. Together they went from Montenegro to Sarajevo (BiH) where they were brought from an office for asylum seekers to the detention prison in Sarajevo. One person of the group is the interviewee who is now staying in the camp in Spuž, because of a push-back to Montenegro after his detainment, which happened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, the 3 others were still detained.

The group started their journey from Piljevla (MNE) towards Bosnia. Their destination was an office for asylum seekers in Sarajevo, precisely the "Service for Foreigners' Affairs Field Office in Ušivak, Hadžići, which is basically a container inside the big camp run by IOM. There they arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2019.

*"When you don't have papers, you need to go there. Because when you don't go there to make paper for Bosnia and police catches you without passport, they directly deport you!"*

At this office, their stuff and bodies were searched and all 4 of them had papers from Montenegro with them, which said that they are already registered in Montenegro as well. When the employee of the office found it, he kept the paper and called the police.

*"After the phone call and when police arrived, he had a smile on his face."*

A short amount of time after the phone call, the police arrived with 5 officers. These police officers wore black uniforms, with the Bosnian flag on their shoulder and a star on their chest. The group of four was brought to a detention prison without an explanation as to what was happening.

This detention prison is located in the outskirts of Sarajevo (Homepage: <http://sps.gov.ba/imigracioni-centar/>).

Once they arrived there, they were searched again. During this search, one officer punched the respondent with a fist in his face and kicked his backpack through the room. It was a big officer who gave about one or two punches to each of the 4 during the search of the personal belongings.

*"He had power! I didn't see why and wanted to cry. I am not doing something bad, I just wanted to go for asylum. He don't know me, maybe because I was a Muslim man or something like that."*

Another officer who was present and witnessed the incident said something in Bosnian. The respondent guessed that this officer was a Muslim himself and asked the perpetrator why he is doing that, maybe trying to stop him.

All their personal belongings were taken from them and listed on a paper which was handed to them. This paper, and another one, which said that they should leave the country within 8 days were handed to them. Fingerprints of all of their fingers were taken.

After that procedure, the friends were separated and put into 4 different cells. The respondent was imprisoned for 35 days, in a cell with 3 other people. His friends who were imprisoned on the same day are still there. (As of: 06.07.2019)

During his stay, there was never a translator provided and at no point did he receive information about the concrete reasons why he was imprisoned and how long he had to stay.

*“When I asked the guards why they keep me, they said I should speak to the boss, but the boss was never available for me.”*

The conditions in the prison were quite rough, as the interviewee described. Portions of food were small and consisted mainly of bread and 2 small packages of cheese and jam. Old bread that was clearly from the day before was served. It was possible to buy extra food, which was expensive compared to what it was worth. Articles for hygiene were not provided at all, the interviewee bought one shampoo for 4 Euros. Inside the cell there was a toilet and a sink. Detainees had to wash themselves with cold water via this sink because they weren't brought to a washing room. In the buildings there were 2 floors with cells and prisoners of each floor were allowed to take a walk outside for 1 hour per day inside the yard, in an area that was about 20 square meters. The detention prison was full — at that time, there were around 70 people.

*“Some people are already there for 10 months, without doing anything, just because they caught them in Bihać or Velika Kladuša and don't want them to be there.”*

The respondent reports that many of his fellow detainees didn't know anything precise about the reasons for their detention and, in some cases, seemed without an actual violation of a law that would be a legitimization for the detainment. Besides that, people were detained because of entering Bosnia with a Montenegrin paper or *“because they made a problem”*. The interviewee reported one example of an imprisoned Pakistani person, who didn't have a passport with him and didn't register in the asylum seekers office and therefore was detained. But this person had a visa for Italy with him, issued by an Italian embassy, because the brother of this person already lives in Italy. His plan was to just pass the country within the 3 days where it is possible to stay as tourist without a registration, but in these days police controlled and afterwards detained him. At the time of recording the interview (beginning of July, 2017), this man from Pakistan was imprisoned for about 4 months.

The interviewee was also speaking about a tragic event where someone died inside the detention center. It didn't happen at the time he was there, but the person who told him, was a cellmate and witness, who is still detained. One Algerian man became sick inside the cell in February 2019. In the night, he began to spit blood. His cellmates punched against the door and yelled for police the whole night. When the guards showed up in the morning to bring the breakfast, the man was dead.

"How long I have to stay in this prison?", is the most asked sentence by imprisoned people with always the same answer: "Ask the boss". The state of the art, as described, is to keep detainees incapable of acting by not speaking with them and giving them hardly any information.

There is only one possibility to speak to someone else than other prisoners and the guards. Once in a while, IOM-staff shows up and offers counseling about a deportation to the country of origin, so called "Assisted Voluntary Return" (Quoted from: <https://bih.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return>). Every attempt of the interviewee to speak to a lawyer was rejected.

*"Some people even said yes, because they have no idea about how long they can stay there! If you stay there already for 3 months, 4 months, 10 months and nobody is speaking to you, and you don't know how long you have stay there, it's clear you want to go back to Morocco [... ] It's not about having freedom, because they deport you to a country where you are not free also."*

The pushback from the detention center in Sarajevo to Montenegro happened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2019 at the official border crossing points in Šćepan Polje (MNE).

As the interviewee described the procedure of the guard to pick the chosen ones for a pushback to Montenegro, it seems also pretty random.

*"He don't have names, he just points the finger and said, you, you, you and you."*

From his personal belongings he didn't get useful things for a travel back: he only received his clothes, but not his sleeping bag, knife and lighter. He had spent all his money inside the prison to buy food and other things. His phone was returned to him, but the "Maps.me"-App was deleted.

Two officers were present during the pushback. 2 papers were handed out to him. One was about his personal belongings and another one which said that he is not allowed to enter the country for one year. On the street between the border checkpoint of Bosnia and the border checkpoint of Montenegro in Šćepan Polje, all the passengers were dropped off and ordered to go to Montenegro. While passing the Montenegrin police officers at the border checkpoint, he asked for help to find the way to Nikšić (MNE), and this officer only replied:

*"Hajjde, Marsch!"*

01/06/2019

## "WHAT KIND OF HUMANITY TAKES OUR PHONES AND MONEY?"

**Date and time:** June 1, 2019 00:00

**Location:** near Jamena, Serbia

**Coordinates:** 44.865810304275, 19.042311184062

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 16, 17, 20-40 years old, 50+ , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 8 Bosnian police officers, all men wearing blue uniforms; 4 police vans, one police boat

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of twenty individuals, all from Pakistan, left Loznica (SRB) on May 31 at 10:00PM and walked thirty minutes from the town center to the Bosnian border. At the border, they crossed the Drina River and entered Bosnian territory. They walked in the forest until they reached the village Supna (BiH). It was raining heavily and all the members of the group were very wet.

Around 6:00AM or 7:00AM, the group walked on a small road in Supna and at this point, the police saw them. There were four police officers, all men wearing blue uniforms. They were driving two white vans. When the police saw the group, they asked how many people were with them. The police officers took everyone's mobile phones and money, but told the group members that these items would be returned at the border.

The police told the individuals to enter the two vans and they drove the group to what the respondent described as an "army center." The four police officers who initially apprehended the group dropped the men off at this centre and four new police officers then dealt with the group members in the building.

The officers asked the men what their country of origin was. After only two or three minutes at the centre, the police loaded the group members into two large vans and drove the individuals for one and a half hours to a place on the border that was unfamiliar to the group members.

At the border, the respondent asked the police to return their money, amounting to about 1,000 Euros, and their mobile phones, but

*"[the officer] held his baton in the air and threatened to hit us with it when I asked for our things. Someone told me that Bosnia is a good country; that they wouldn't take anything from us. What kind of humanity takes our phones and money?"*

The police officers brought the group members across the River Drina in a police boat in groups of four and shouted at them,

*"Never come to Bosnia again!"*

Once across the river, the group members walked for two or three hours to the village Jamena (SRB) and then walked 30 kilometers further to Šid (SRB).

27/05/2019

**““IF I GO BACK TO BOSNIA, MAYBE I WILL TAKE A LAWYER BECAUSE THE BOSNIAN POLICE STOLE OUR PHONES.””**

**Date and time:** May 27, 2019 11:00

**Location:** Bosnian/Serbian border next to Panjak

**Coordinates:** 43.751056, 19.472625

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Serbia

**Demographics:** 2 person(s), age: 23, 33 years old , from: Iraq, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** insulting, theft of personal belongings, destruction of documents, threatening with batons

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Two friends from Morocco were walking next to a street north of Višegrad (BiH, Republika Srpska), when two police cars passed them and suddenly stopped. The cars came back to them and three Bosnian border police officers stepped out and asked them where they are going. The respondent believed that the police officers were drunk because their breath smelled like alcohol. Both individuals showed the officers their police papers for Ušivak in Sarajevo and Bira camp in Bihać. Then the police officers took the two individuals to the bus station and asked the employee at what time is the bus leaving for Sarajevo. The employee told the officer that there are not any buses until the next day.

The police officers then drove the individuals to the police station in Višegrad and talked a bit with other officers and then drove them directly to the Bosnian/Serbian border. There the police again forced them to hand over their smartphones and their documents of the camps in Sarajevo and Bihać. They put the phones in their pockets and ripped apart their documents in front of the individuals. One police officer even warned them not to tell anyone about the smartphones and documents.

*“This paper is like a passport to us. Because they destroyed our documents, they could push us back to Serbia. When I told them, that I want my phones back, they raised their arms with a stick in their hand and threatened me, to beat me like an animal. They shouted: “Go back to Serbia!” Then we ran away. By the time we had no money, but if we had some, they also would have stolen it from us.”*

*"If I go back to Bosnia, maybe I will take a lawyer because the police stole our phones."*

When they went five kilometers to the first police station in Serbia, the police officers there told them to go back into the woods and reenter Bosnia. The two individuals then went to another police station in a bigger city, which then sent them to a camp where they had an interview with translation. Then the police officers gave the respondent a paper, stating that he had to leave the country within 24 hours, or he would go to prison for six months. The respondent decided at this point to leave Serbia and go to Montenegro.

Once arriving in Montenegro, he decided to go back to Morocco, because of all he had endured at the hands of police officers, as well as because of the loss of a friend who drowned in the Kolpa River.

19/05/2019

## **"THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR THEM IS THAT WE GO BACK TO MONTENEGRO"**

**Date and time:** May 19, 2019 03:20

**Location:** Metaljka, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 43.538586, 19.156478

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 25, 30 years old, one family: 45-50, 18, 23 years old, from: Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Police involved:** 2 Republika Srpska police officers; 3 Bosnian border officers, 1 police van; 2 border officers in a car, 4 checkpoint police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

One family consisting of a mother (45-50 years old), her two sons (18, 23), and two single men, all from Syria, departed from Pljevlja (MNE) at 1:00 AM on May 18th. They took a taxi to the border and entered Bosnia by foot near Metaljka (BiH).

They spent the next 24 hours walking through the forest, but during this time one member of the group fell and injured her leg. Now near the town of Brezovice (BiH), they left the forest to walk along the main road to look for someone who could help the injured member of the group.

At around 3:00 am (May 19th), the respondent reported that they encountered two local police officers on a road in Brezovice, who he claimed were from Republika Srpska (an entity within Bosnia-Herzegovina). The officers stopped the group. They notified the officers that they needed to go to a hospital because one of the individuals had an injured leg. The police officers did not speak English, but told them to "wait, wait." The respondent believed that the officers would help them get to the hospital. Instead, within ten minutes, three border police officers arrived in a van.

The border police asked them where they are going and the respondent told them they wanted to go to the camp in Sarajevo (BiH) to ask for asylum and that one individual was injured and needed a medical assistance.

For ten minutes the group tried to speak to the border officers, expressing their need for a hospital, but the officers claimed they did not understand. The officers then shouted at the group and told them that they must go back to Montenegro.

*"The only solution for them is that we go back to Montenegro."*

The officers shouted at them to enter the van and they drove them back to Metaljka (BiH). At this point, the respondent was separated from the other four members of the group after they had an argument. He stayed on the Bosnian side of the border to try again to reach Sarajevo (BiH) while he reported that the others crossed back into Montenegro.

The respondent walked along the main road from where he was dropped off by the border police and arrived at the Bosnian border checkpoint around 7:00 am. There were four officers present at the checkpoint, one woman and three men. The respondent showed them his Syrian documents and told them that he wanted to go to Sarajevo to apply for asylum.

The officers checked the respondents' documents and after ten minutes, two border police officers arrived to the location in a vehicle. They shouted at him to get into the vehicle and they drove him to the same point where he was dropped off earlier in the morning by the first three border police officers that he had encountered.

From there he re-entered Montenegro and walked along the main road trying to find a car that would pick him up and drive him to Pljevlja, but no cars stopped for him and he walked for six hours to return to the city.

18/05/2019

**“IF I TRY 100 TIMES AND THEY PUSH ME BACK, NO PROBLEM. IF I TRY 200 TIMES AND THEY PUSH ME BACK, NO PROBLEM.”**

**Date and time:** May 18, 2019 10:00

**Location:** Bileća Bus Station, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 42.856246, 18.461178

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 26, 28, 25, 40 years old , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On May 17, a group of four Pakistani men traveled from Podgorica (MNE) to Nikšić (MNE) and took the bus from there to Vilusi (MNE). They arrived in Vilusi around 6:00PM and stayed there for two hours, waiting for darkness which would give them protection from being discovered by the authorities when they tried to cross the Bosnian-Montenegrin border. They left Vilusi around 8:00PM and walked all night until they reached the border and crossed near Deleuša (BiH) Border Crossing.

The group continued walking to Bileća (BiH) where they arrived around 10:00AM. By this time, several people in the group had become tired and they decided to go to the bus station in Bileća and try to take a bus to Sarajevo (BiH). The respondent, however, preferred to stay in the forest and avoid entering the village.

*“I tell them: ticket is not good, walk, walk, walk is good, but they are crazy! I tell them this is not good, but no, they say, we get ticket, ticket is good, I tell them no good, this is not good, but they didn't listen to me!”*

Despite the respondent's reluctance to enter the town, the group decided to try to buy bus tickets anyway. At 10:00AM on May 18, the group walked on a big street towards the bus station (see Fig. 1). Two local police officers (the respondent described seeing the Republika Srpska emblem on their blue uniforms) approached them by foot. The respondent described one officer as having black hair and the other officers as a bald headed man. Both of them were tall with blue eyes.

The officers casually asked the men where they were from. The respondent, having the best English skills in the group, replied that they are from Pakistan, they want to go to Sarajevo and ask for asylum. However, the police officers ordered the group to get into the police van. The respondent inferred that the officers did not seem to understand English at all.

*"I said I want asylum, in Europe is my cousins, my friends, but they didn't understand."*

The individuals were brought to a point near the Bosnian/Montenegrin border (See Fig. 2) and told with gestures to go back and not return.

*"But I don't listen to them, I waited there for three hours and then came back again."*

After waiting three hours, the group walked for two hours on a small paved road. Around 3:00PM on May 18, three police officers saw them and approached them by foot. Once again, the respondent explained that they were from Pakistan, on their way to Sarajevo and they want to apply for international protection there in the camp.

The respondent reported that the police said:

*"This is border area, you must reach Sarajevo and there is a camp, you can ask for asylum there. But here is no camp, this is border area. You sit down here!"*

The respondent described one of the officers as "very angry", but he clarified that the second group of officers spoke very politely, more politely than the officers the group had encountered before. The police called other officers and after two hours of waiting a police vehicle arrived. The whole group was brought to the Immigration Office in Trebinje (BiH) where the authorities asked them for papers, but the group claimed to not have papers.

*"We had papers from registration in Montenegro, but before in the forest, we tore them up and threw them away in order to avoid being deported back to Montenegro."*

The authorities did not ask the group any further questions individuals weren't asked any further questions and were told to take the bus back to Montenegro the next day at their own expense. They spent the night in the police office in Trebinje where they had to sleep on the floor with blankets provided by the officers. They had access to toilets but were not given food nor water even though they had asked for it.

*"I tell them: Give me food, I am hungry, but they didn't give me."*

The next morning, May 19 at 9:00AM, one officer who the respondent described as being from the Immigration Office and four police officers which the respondent estimated as local police escorted the group to the bus station in Trebinje from where they took the bus back to Nikšić (MNE). The authorities talked to the bus driver before so they were not checked at the border checkpoint and just allowed to cross. From Nikšić, they took the bus back to Konik Camp in Podgorica (MNE).

Fig. 1: The point where the group as stopped by the 2 local police officers

Fig. 2: The point where the group was pushed back to the first time

17/05/2019

## “THEY MADE FUN OF US”

**Date and time:** May 17, 2019 08:00

**Location:** Metaljika, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 43.55023, 19.153128

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: one family: 2, 9, 15, 21, 38, 41 years old, other two families: unknown, from: Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, threatening with guns

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Three families from Iraqi Kurdistan left Pljevlja (MNE) on 11th May. This was their first attempt to cross the border towards Bosnia.

The respondent's family consisted of his father (41) his mother (38), himself (21) and his siblings (15, 9, 2). They were with another two families comprised of parents, each with 3 and 2 small children. The respondent cannot recall their age.

They walked through Montenegrin forests and mountains for four days and entered Bosnia on the fifth day. At this point, the respondent was “very sick” and could not walk without the support of his father, who continued through the mountainous terrain with his arm around his son's shoulder. They continually fell behind the group and felt ashamed that they were a burden.

In the evening of the 16th May, around 7:00 pm, two blue and white police vans passed the group on a small road near an abandoned farmhouse. The respondent could not recall the precise location of their apprehension. They stopped and ten police officers disembarked from the vehicles and order them to stop. The respondent remembers that many of them had black hair and beards.

The group was asked if they had papers, where they were going and who among them had the best English. This was the father of one of the other families travelling with the respondent's. He explained to the only officer in the group who spoke poor English that they were on their way to Sarajevo (BiH) where they wanted to apply for asylum. The officer informed the group that they would bring them to a police station and organize their transfer to Sarajevo.

Reassured and glad to avoid walking through the forests for one more night, all 15 entered into one of the vans and were driven a short distance to a police station.

[By now, the respondent was nearly unconscious due to his health problems and could not reconstruct what happened next. His father, who was also present during the interview, took over.]

The group were placed inside a small room in the police station to wait for their ride to Sarajevo. They were informally asked to disclose their nationality. No further questions were put forward, and they didn't observe the officers writing down anything. During their detention, the group was not given food or water. Some officers filmed them with their smartphones – without asking for permission – while mocking them.

“I think they use this application to change the face from man to woman, with glasses, with beard, with hat, with ears from cat to make fun of us.”

After one hour in the police station, they were informed that now they would be transferred to Sarajevo (BiH). The group were loaded into the same two vans from which they had arrived. In the van, the officers asked for all their registration papers from Montenegro, tore them up and brought the three families to the same place near the abandoned farmhouse where they were first picked up.

“They told us go to this house, sleep and try again, or go back to Montenegro.”

As the other two families exited the car and entered the farmhouse, the respondent's father and mother asked the officers why they were not brought to Sarajevo (BiH) but to this unsanitary place instead. In response, two officers started shouting at the respondent's family in Bosnian. They punched the father and older son in the ribs. Next, they attempted to beat the younger boy of 15-years, but the mother prevented them from doing so.

The officers left and the three families spent the night in the old farmhouse.

“It was a place for animals, very dirty and very bad smell.”

[From this point on, the respondent can recall the series of events and re-engages with the interview].

In the morning, around 8am on the 17th of May, the three families left in order to continue their journey towards Sarajevo. The respondent however, due to his bad health condition, decided to split from the rest of the group, together with his father, in an attempt to find medical treatment somewhere.

The respondent was sitting next to the road and his father tried to stop several police cars that passed by, but they just continued driving.

Finally, his father was so desperate and worried about his son that he kneeled down in the middle of the street to force the next police car to stop. Using gestures and hand signs, he asked the police to bring them to the nearest hospital. Some of the officers were the same who detained them the evening before. The officers agreed and drove them approximately 40 minutes always on the same street to a hospital. Based on this description, the hospital was presumable in Goražde or Foča.

It was not possible to confirm their place of treatment as both hospitals refused to provide information about the incident).

They were escorted to the treatment room by the officers who talked to the hospital staff and left after approximately 5 minutes. Without being asked for documentation, the respondent received treatment from two female and one male doctor.

After 15 minutes, four new police officers arrived. They were wearing the same uniform as the others the group had encountered. They asked one of the doctors to remove the infusion from the respondent's arm and slapped him in order to make him stand up. They escorted the two men to a police van and brought them to a place in the mountains. Here they handed them over to another police officer in a blue police car.

He drove the two individuals to a point near Metaljika (BiH). He indicated to them the way back to Montenegro and told the men to get on the ground. When they protested against this, he threatened them by pretending to draw his weapon and then left.

The respondent and his father walked arm in arm down the road that the officer had said leads to Montenegro. Both of them were very exhausted.

After a walk of 30 minutes, a truck driver stopped next to them and told them that the street was designed for woodworkers. He continued that if they want to go to Montenegro, they would have backtrack and then turn left.

They walked back, crossed the border into Montenegro and were picked up by Montenegrin police which brought them to the local hospital in Pljevlja. The respondent finally received treatment (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Medical Report from the hospital in Pljevlja

17/05/2019

## “DON'T BEAT ME ON MY HEAD!”

**Date and time:** May 17, 2019 18:00

**Location:** Divin, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 43.030294127217694, 18.294219558939176

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: 19, 27, 27, 31, from: Afghanistan, Pakistan

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), reckless driving

**Police involved:** 3 Bosnian police officers driving a van, 6 Bosnian police officers in van, one police woman and one police man at Delusa border crossing, all wore the Bosnian Federation emblem on their uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of four individuals from Pakistan and Afghanistan (19, 27, 27, and 31 years old) departed from Niksic (MNE) at approximately 3:00 am on May, 17th. They rode in a taxi for 75 minutes and exited the vehicle approximately one kilometre before the Bosnian border.

They crossed the border into Bosnia near Kazanci (BiH) around 5:00 am. They stopped and rested in the forest all day and departed from the area near Stepen (BiH) at 21:00 pm. They again walked until 5:00 am and stopped near Plana (BiH) to rest. On the second day, they slept during the daylight hours and started walking again around 16:00 pm. They realized they were out of food and decided to walk along the main road to find a shop.

They walked down to the main road near Narat (BiH). After approximately two hours of walking, the respondent believes that a local person saw them near the town of Divin (BiH) and called the police. Around 18:00 pm three male police officers in their mid-30s wearing the emblem of Bosnia-Herzegovina arrived on the road where the group walked. They were driving a white van with blue writing on the side.

The police asked the four men for their passports. The respondent told them they did not have passports and instead they showed them their Montenegro police papers. The policemen took three cell phones from the group and 70 Euro. They were ordered into the police van and waited sitting in the van without moving.

After an hour, six more male police officers arrived at the scene in another police van. The respondent believed that these were border police officers because of the BiH emblem on their uniforms and the *Granicna Policija* writing on the side of the van. The respondent reported that four of these officers were over 45 years old and the other two were in their early 30s. Once the second police van arrived, the group was told to switch into the newly arrived vehicle.

The police had pushed down the seats of this van and the men were forced to squeeze into the space on the floor of the van. There was one policeman standing outside the van shaking his finger at the group inside. After a second hour of waiting, another police car driven by two male officers arrived carrying four Arabic men. The police ordered the four Arabic men into the van with the respondent and his group. The eight men were squeezed on the floor of the van, sitting with their knees into their chests and arms wrapped around their legs. Two officers started driving. The respondent reported that the officers were swerving a lot and reaching speeds of up to 120 km/h.

The respondent reported that the police drove the van one hour to the Deleuša (BiH) border crossing. When they arrived at the crossing, a policewoman counted the men and took them into a room. The four Arabic men were placed in another room from the respondent and his group. The respondent's room smelled very bad and had dirty clothes and socks on the floor. There were four chairs in the room, but the men were told to stand against the wall. There was no water, food or toilet provided to them.

A policeman was in the room with them and called them to him one-by-one. He ordered the group to remove their jackets. Once their jackets are removed another policeman came in with a baton and beat the men one-by-one. The police man was tall, with a shaved head, he was around 40 years old. He was wearing a blue uniform with the Federation emblem on the arm. The respondent reported that this officer hit the group. He struck their head, hands and shoulders with his baton.

Before the attack started, the respondent stated to the officer:

“My head was operated on. It is very injured. Don't beat me on my head!”

Despite this warning, the officer still beat the respondent on his head and shoulder. The officer shouted “No Bosnia” as he hit the men. He shouted many other things at them in what the respondent believed was Bosnian language, but he did not understand the meaning.

The group watched as the police beat each person one-by-one. After the beatings they stood in the room for 90 minutes and then were told to come out. Two other police officers arrived and drove the van which had earlier transported the group to Deluša.

The men were directly handed over to the Montenegrin police. For two hours the group stood on the side of the road in the rain while they waited for the officers to give back the group's documents, money and mobile phones. After two hours, their items were returned to them and the police officers call the group a taxi, which they took back to Niksic (MNE).

For three or four days, the men had bad headaches and bruises from the baton strikes.

**09/05/2019**

## “I TRY AGAIN AND IF IT DOESN'T WORK AGAIN, I LOST MY COUNTRY, I DON'T CARE.”

**Date and time:** May 9, 2019 21:00

**Location:** Foča, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 43.50274467820438, 18.7850332226013184

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 22-25 years old , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 officers that are described as Bosnian border police, 2 local police officers from Foča (BiH), 2 blue-white police vans

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Starting their journey from Albania, 4 Syrian men, all of them between 22 and 25 years old, arrived in Konik camp in Podgorica, Montenegro (MNE) in the morning of the 1st May. One of them had an injured hand as a result of a fall in the Montenegrin mountains. They were told that it's not possible for them to stay in the Konik camp as access is intended mainly for families. They encountered a local person who offered them private shelter, but the group found the conditions of the accommodation unacceptable. Instead, they took a taxi to the

camp in Spuž where they arrived at 7.30 am. They didn't wish to stay there, however. They wanted to register at the camp's reception centre in order to get papers indicating their stay in Montenegro as legal. After the registration process that included the collection of their personal information (name, nationality, date of birth) as well as the taking of fingerprints, they went to a hotel in Podgorica where they paid 10€/night per person.

The group stayed there for 4 nights to get some rest from the previous stage of their journey and to prepare for the next stage. On 4th May, they took a bus to Pljevlja (MNE) where they arrived at around 9:00 pm in the evening and stayed for two more days in a hotel. They took a taxi to a place 3km in front of the Bosnian border with Montenegro. On 6 May around midnight they walked from the border for two days through mountains and forests before arriving approximately 7km in front of Foča (BiH) on the 8th of May around 3:00 am. While approaching the village on a street that the respondent describes as "mainly used by border police, no public street", a blue-white police van approached them.

"Two of our friends managed to hide in some bushes next to the street, but me and my friend were too tired. They were lucky, police didn't see them and they are now in Bosnia, we are still here."

Two police officers that the respondent describes as border police (even though he didn't recognize any of the Bosnian police uniform emblems that the interviewer showed him) got off the car. One of them is described as "very very big, bigger than normal Montenegro people and they are already very big" and the other as "normal".

They were asked for their papers and ID cards but denied having any of those.

"We just say we are from Syria and want to go to Sarajevo. I didn't ask for asylum, I don't want to stay in Bosnia."

The officers asked the men for money and took in total 50€ from them before putting them in the car in a way that the respondent describes as "normal, without violence" and drove approximately 1h 30min with them to a place near the border with Montenegro (see Fig. 1)

At this point, they were let out of the car and told to go back to Montenegro by foot. The men pretended to walk back, but when the officers drove away, they stopped, took a break and decided to try it one more time after having checked their provisions and found them to be sufficient for a second attempt.

However, this time they took many breaks.

"Always 4 hours walking, 15 minutes break, 5 hours walking, 15min break, we were very tired. Sometimes there were cars on the road, whenever a car approached we were hiding behind trees next to the street."

After a day and a half, they arrived at the bus station in Foča (BiH, see Fig. 2) where they met a group of five other men in their early 20s, all from Syria. They decided to take the next bus to Sarajevo together. They pooled their money and one member of the group went to the counter to buy tickets for all of them.

"This man is very lucky man, in Sarajevo now with all money for tickets!"

Soon after the man left to the counter inside the building, two local police officers appeared. They stopped the group and called another police unit that the respondent describes as border police. Four officers of this unit arrived in one blue-white police van and the police ordered the group of now six individuals into the van.

Again, they drove with them around 1h30min to the same place as last time (see Fig. 1), where they took them out of the the car and told to walk back to Montenegro. And again, after the officers drove away, four of the men decided to try another time to reach the bus to Sarajevo at the bus station in Foča (BiH, see Fig. 2). The respondent and his friend, however, as it was already their second failed attempt, were too exhausted and were running out of food and water so they decided to just go back to Montenegro in order to recover and try it again some days later.

"I try again, I lost my country, I don't care."

The two men crossed the border by foot (see Fig. 1) and took a bus to Nikšić (MNE).

Fig. 1: The place where they were brought by Bosnian police. This pin is only approximate.

Fig. 2: The bus station in Foča (BiH) where the men were caught the second time

**06/05/2019**

## **"THE POLICE FIRED THE GUN THREE TIMES IN THE AIR TO SCARE US"**

**Date and time:** May 6, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Bosnian/Montenegrin border next to Deleuša

**Coordinates:** 42.857897, 18.477357

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 7 person(s), age: 22-28 years old , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Somalia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** threatening with guns, gunshots

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of seven persons from Algeria, Morocco, Syria and Somalia walked two days crossing the Montenegrin/Bosnian border to reach the town Bileća (BiH), where the police caught them. They had run out of food, so they went to the village to find some.

*"If there wouldn't be rain or we would not have been so hungry, the police would not have caught us."*

They found an old house and went inside to change their wet clothes. But someone in the town called the police and after 40 minutes and a police car suddenly came towards them. Inside the police car there were three Bosnian police officers in blue and black uniforms, the respondent had the impression that it was the border police. The police came directly towards the group and threatened to hit them to dissuade them from running away. One of the group members tried to run anyway, and subsequently one of the police officers shot his gun three times in the air, which scared everyone. Because they didn't want to get shot so everyone of the group stood still.

*"Maybe because there were 2 female person with us, the police didn't hit or insult us."*

The police officers forced them to hand over all the money and phones that they had.

*"I could see it in their eyes, that they wanted to keep it, but I strongly insisted, that they give it back, and they did."*

The police officers asked them where they want to go and when the group said "Bosnia" they just laughed and put all of them in a van and drove them about 30 minutes directly to the border. There the Montenegrin police were already waiting for them and the Bosnian police handed the people over to them. The Montenegrin police asked if they have the papers from Montenegro, which all of them had.

*"Here the paper is called "hartija". It allows you to stay 15 days in Montenegro. If you are longer than that here or you don't have a paper at all, border police sends you directly back to Albania."*

Afterwards the Montenegrin police officers brought the group to a bus station in Nikšić and told them to leave. "

*"Because I said that we have no money, the police bought us the bus tickets. We wanted to go right away again to the Bosnian side of the border but we knew that the Montenegrin and Bosnian police is in contact and that they would catch us."*

**22/04/2019**

## **"ONE POLICE OFFICER DRAGGED THE DRIVER OUT OF THE CAR AND STARTED BEATING HIM"**

**Date and time:** April 22, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Trebenje, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.7127486, 18.5365625

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 11 person(s), age: 3-46 , from: Iraq, Kurdistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, forcing to undress, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 1 black van, 3 officers (Bileca), two of them in a black uniform, one in a blue uniform. On the uniform they had on their shoulder a „Serbian emblem, because it was in the Serbian Republic of Bosnia. One police officer in civil clothing, a white polo shirt and blue jeans. 1 van, 3 police officers in blue uniform while transported from Bileca to Trebenje, the same 3 officers were at Trebenje border checkpoint Klobuk. One of them was older with grey hair and „a little bit big with a belly“, the others were described as maybe 35 years old.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of food/water, the group gave the officers money and the police bought food for them at the police station in Bileca

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of 11 was sitting in the back of a van, driving on the main road of Bileca (BIH), when the vehicle was stopped by the Bosnian authorities for a routine check. One officer dragged the driver out of the car and started beating him in front of the group. This disturbed them and the children started crying. The officer informed them:

*“Don’t worry, we will bring you to the camp in Sarajevo.”*

The officers then drove the group in the same van to a police station in Bileca. There, they were brought to a big room, which was described as a “hall” with tables and chairs but without windows. The officers took photos of all individuals and of their registration papers of the camp in Montenegro.

Afterwards, they asked who could speak English. One man answered “yes” and was taken to another room, which looked “like an office.” There, he was interviewed by an older male in civil clothes, a white polo shirt and blue jeans. He asked the man who spoke English about how he got to Bileca, how he organized the trip, how they got in touch with the driver and about details of him and the other individuals. He additionally asked him to sign six papers in Bosnian language. The respondent told the officer that he didn’t understand them, to which the officer replied:

*“Just sign it!”*

Afterwards, the individual was brought back to the room. The group asked the officers for food and water, but were told:

*“Give us money and we will bring you food!”*

In response, the group gave some money to the officers and they brought pizza and something to drink. They had to spend all night in this hall.

The next morning around 10 am, the group was taken outside of the station. They were told to stand in front of the black van, which had originally taken them from Bileca. The older man in the white polo shirt, who conducted the interview, took a photo of the group. This photo was later found online in a newspaper, together with videos from the “cage” in Trebenje, where the group was detained after: <http://saff.ba/sokantno-kod-trebinja-drze-migrante-sa-djecom-i-zenama-u-kavezima-video/>

The organization ‘Are You Syrious’ (AYS) received the videos and the photo from the “cage” from one of the individuals of the group, but not the photo in front of the van. Afterwards, a white van arrived with three officers. The group was loaded in the van and forced to sit on the floor, as there weren’t any other options.

*“We had to sit on the floor, the very dirty floor.”*

The officers drove in a very unsafe manner and apparently very fast. The group was brought to the Trebenje (BIH) border checkpoint ‘Klobuk’. They were put in small rooms, separated by a white metal fence. The floor of this “cage” was again very dirty. There, they didn’t receive any food or water. The officers asked:

*“How much money do you have?”*

To which the group replied by naming an amount of money. Then, the men of the group were one after another called in to a separate room where they were shouted at and forced to undress to their underwear. The officers searched all their clothes and luggage, but no money was taken from them.

Later, when they returned to the cell, an officer kicked a guy’s leg with his foot, telling him to clean the cell. He did so with the help of the other individuals of the group.

Around 5 pm, the group was released from the cell and boarded a local bus, which brought them to Niksic (MNE). They had to pay for the bus themselves. From Niksic, they took a bus back to Podgorica and from there another bus to Spuz, where the camp is located.

The respondent commented:

*“There was a husband and his wife with us in the group. One night before the police caught us, they left the group to go to the highway to find help because the wife was about to give birth. Later we met the husband alone in Bileca police station. He was kept in a cell. He told us he got beaten because he asked for food. The police had earlier brought his wife to the hospital, where she gave birth. All this time, the husband was kept in a cell, not able to contact his wife. He didn’t know how she was doing. Now, two days later, they brought him together with his wife and the new-born to the camp in Sarajevo.”*

**15/04/2019**

## **“ONE WOMAN, 9 MONTHS PREGNANT, STARTED CRYING. THE POLICE SHOUTED AT HER: ‘STOP CRY!’”**

**Date and time:** April 15, 2019 06:00

**Location:** Strane, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 43.77501709999999, 18.84744079999996

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: nine months - 40 years old , from: Afghanistan, Iraq, Kurdistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting

**Police involved:** 3 police officers in dark blue/black uniform („border special police”) without any emblems on it. The officer who beat one member of the group was described as average tall, not old, a bit fat with a „chubby, fat face”. They arrived in a „minivan from police Bosnia without windows. The car was around 2 meters long, blue and white. One police officer, who arrived later at the scene was wearing a blue uniform with 3 stars on its shoulders and an emblem of the Bosnian police. He spoke little English.

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

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of 22 left Pljevlja (MNE) on April 11, 2019, by taxi. After reaching an area near the Bosnian border, they walked for four days through the forest. On April 15 around 6 pm, the group was apprehended near Strane (BiH), by three officers.

They described the officers:

*“It look like special border police. They had dark uniforms. With minivan from police Bosnia.”*

When the people on the move first saw the officers, they immediately started running away. The officers got out of the car and shouted aggressively in Bosnian at them to make them stop, further scaring them by putting their hands on the guns attached on their holsters. This made all the people on the move return, and they were ordered to stand in one spot. Only one individual was still hiding. When another

individual called him in Kurdish to come back to the group, one officer hit him with three fist bumps. He boxed him two times in his right eye and one time on the right side of his head.

*"He had a chubby and fat face."*

The one who was hiding came back to the group who was very scared, the children started crying and screaming. The officers told them:

*"Stop speaking!"*

One of the respondents mentions:

*"We did not ask for asylum to the police in Bosnia. We were very scared!"*

Another police car arrived and one officer, described as wearing a blue uniform with three stars on the shoulder, a hat and a Bosnian police emblem, stepped out of the car. When he arrived, the group first thought he might be good. He told the individuals to give him their mobile phones and to hand over their bags and registration cards from the camp in Podgorica. But when he found the registration paper from the camp in Podgorica, he harshly started to check the six people's phones, even forcing them to unlock them to check their calls, photos, messages and maps. The bags were searched by the other officers, but they didn't take anything away. Then, before being ordered to enter the minivan, the officers took a photo of the whole group.

*"It was a very small car, and we had not enough space!"*

Since the group's apprehension and the boarding in the minivan one hour had passed.

*"One woman, 9 months pregnant, started crying. The police shouted at her: 'Stop cry!'".*

The group was driven back for around two hours to the border of Montenegro. There, they were dropped in an abandoned place and told to walk back to Montenegro. The officer described as having stars on his shoulder told them:

*"Coming back, big problem!"*

When one individual asked for the reason, the officer just answered:

*"Big problem!"*

Once the authorities left, one individual called the emergency number 112. He told the person on the phone that they are a group of 22, which just had been deported back to Montenegro and that they have one woman with them who is nine months pregnant and 11 children, the youngest 9 months old. He told them that they desperately need food and water in order to return to Pljevlja. The person on the phone assured he would organize something and told him that the group should wait. Around one hour later one Montenegrin police car arrived. The officers asked about the incident and the group explained the situation of the pushback by the Bosnian police. Afterwards, the police gave them food, water and shoes to leave. Food and water were from the Red Cross, recognised by the respondent from distributions in the camps, the shoes for the children were described as black with white flowers. Before the police left, the group asked for a bus or a taxi, but the police told them:

*"We don't have a big car."*

The group walked for around two hours on the road to Pljevlja and had to spend the night outside, making a fire against the cold and waiting for the next morning to come. Then they continued walking for around seven more hours until they reached Pljevlja. On their way, they approached several locals, and asked them to call a taxi, which was denied every time. Either the person stated that they didn't have a phone with them or the number of a taxi company. It has been reported locally that the public bus from Cajnice (BIH) to Pljevlja (MNE) never lets people on the move enter the bus, even though they are heading towards Pljevlja. Luckily though, this group was allowed to enter a bus from Pljevlja to Podgorica from where they went back to the camp located in the village of Spuz. Back in the camp, the person who was beaten by the Bosnian police didn't receive any medical treatment which he commented with:

*"Doctors in the camp know nothing."*

The doctor's statement apparently was:

*"I can't help. I only have pampers."*

15/04/2019

## **"PLEASE, PLEASE, THE BABY IS SICK, LOOK AT HER! SHE NEEDS TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL"**

**Date and time:** April 15, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Tuzi, Montenegro

**Coordinates:** 42.3615146, 19.3383147

**Pushback from:** Montenegro

**Pushback to:** Albania

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 5 - 35 years old , from: Afghanistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used, threatening with guns, pushing them on the shoulder in order to move

**Police involved:** 3 „strong, tall“ officers in dark blue uniforms, 3 different officers with the same dark blue uniforms and one big dark-brown dog, one white „prison“ van, without windows. The back was separated from the driver's area through a metal – wall, with one small opening to the driver's seat.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The group of four men and one minor crossed the Albanian-Montenegrin border not far from the Hani i Hoti border crossing (Albania), heading towards Tuzi, (MNE) with the goal of reaching

the camp in Spuz (MNE). In the evening of the April 15th, after 10 hours of travel, they passed the Tuzi (MNE) train station and continued to walk towards Podgorica.

At this point, the group was approached by three police officers. The officers wore dark blue uniforms. The respondent described the officers as shouting in Montenegrin before pointing their guns at the group. The officers pointed with their hands to the ground, and the group understood to lay down.

*"They screamed 'Stop, Stop!' at us and showed us to sleep on the ground. The baby started screaming, we told her: It's okay, it's okay."*

*"The police looked strong, scary. When you see them, you feel fear."*

The officers ordered the group to walk back to the Tuzi train station and escorted them on foot for around 10 minutes until they reached the station. The officers walked behind them.

On the way, the group told the officers that the child in their group needed to go to a hospital. The 5-year-old was exhausted from the long walk and had to be carried, as she was not able to walk anymore. The officers replied: "We bring you to police station, to office, we take your fingerprints and then we bring you to camp. There is doctor."

*"This made us happy. We told them we were very hungry and thirsty and so tired from the long walk."*

In the police office of the Tuzi train station, the group was told to sit on chairs in a corner and wait. In this police station, there were many officers present. One officer gave the group a small bottle of water. When the bottle was empty, they wanted to give it back to the officers in order to put it in the trash, but the officers told them to keep the bottle. "This irritated us. Why should we keep it? We will go to camp, there we will not need it."

After around ten minutes of waiting, an officer approached the group telling them to follow him outside. A white van was parked outside of the station. The officer told the group: "Get inside the car!" Three different officers than those who had originally approached the group, but with the same blue uniforms, sat in front of the van. There was also a "big dark-brown" dog in the front the car with the officers.

The front-seats were divided from the back of the car with a metal divider. There was a small window in the divider. In the back there were no seats and the group sat on the floor. There were no windows in the back.

The group was loaded in the van and driven approximately 20 minutes to the Albanian border.

*"It was really so strange, this was a car with which the police brings people to prison. I asked my friend to check our GPS location. We were shocked when we saw that the car drove towards Albania. I told to the police: 'Please, please, the baby is sick, look at her! She needs to go to the hospital, she will die!' One officer said: 'Okay, wait one minute.'"*

The van stopped in an area without houses at the Albanian border. It was described by the group as "a village without houses, near a forest". When the van stopped, the officers and the dog went out of the car. The dog was held on a leash.

One officer opened the side door and told the group to get out. The group got out, but they did not take their bags. An officer shouted: "Take your bags!" and grabbed one member of the group roughly by the shoulder. The group took their bags and sat down, as they were exhausted and hungry.

The officers grabbed the members of the group by the arms and pulled them up. They shouted: "Go, go! This way Albania!" The officers followed the group for a bit, then left them.

*"We didn't know where we are going. The baby was so tired. She was like a dead body. We passed many ways until we found a well-paved road."*

The group continued the journey on the Albanian side, in order to try to cross into Montenegro the following night. They walked until 6:00 pm, waited until 9:00 pm and crossed again into Montenegro. They reached Podgorica the next morning around 6:30 am. On their way, they adults took turns in carrying the child, because she was not able to walk anymore.

*"The girl was crying, but we lied to her, we told her, 10 minutes, 10 minutes, we will reach soon."*

Early in the morning the group arrived in the Camp in Spuz, MNE. They had to wait around five hours in front of the camp. They were not provided food or water during this time.

Once allowed into camp, the group was nearly divided into different rooms, one member of the group said: "We are a family, we don't want to be separated!", and the person responsible replied: "Here we decide, not you!"

*"On this journey, we saw a lot of hardship, and then we receive this kind of treatment, it is really not nice. It made us really sad."*

**14/04/2019**

## **"WE WERE PUT LIKE ANIMALS IN A CAGE."**

**Date and time:** April 14, 2019 17:30

**Location:** Trebinje, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.70710754978689, 18.350968746298804

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: unknown , from: Syria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** insulting

**Police involved:** 2 police officers, blue uniforms with the Bosnian police emblem on the shoulder, 2 white VW vans with blue stripes on the side. Later an unknown number of Montenegrin authorities and on the way back to the camp one other Montenegrin officer.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group left Nikšić (MIH) in the evening by bus to reach a village near the Bosnian border. From there they walked for two days through the forest. As they approached the village of Trebinje (BiH), they felt very tired and cold. The small children were hungry and thirsty, some of them had high temperature. The group tried to seek help. When one Bosnian family saw the group, they told them:

*„Don't walk here, go forest!“*

But the group decided to continue walking through the village. Another man saw them and made a phone call. While on the phone, he was looking at the group and 15 minutes later, what was described as a white VW van arrived. Two officers stepped out of the car, and stopped the group.

One officer asked them where they were from and if they had documents.

*“He ask in a rough way.“*

One Syrian individual showed him his document and the officer made a phone call, saying:

*„I have a group of Syrians here, what I do with them?“*

When he finished his call, he told the group:

*„You go back to Montenegro. You have ten seconds to get into the car or I start to beat you! I will destroy your phones and I will steal your money!“*

Frightened, the group entered the van, which was way too small for all of them.

*„It is a car for 6 people. We were sitting like sardines in the car.“*

One individual asked the officer where they were going, and he said:

*„Back to Montenegro!“*

*„But we need milk and food for the children.“*

The officer answered: *„We will give you. Go to Serbia, go to Montenegro, it's good!“*

After approximately 30 minutes in the car, they arrived at the border checkpoint Klobuk. The officers took all their phones and put the individuals in three small rooms divided by white metal fences. There was no space for them to move and the children started crying.

*„We asked the officers again to give us milk for the babies. He pointed at us and laughed. He said: 'I don't have, I am not market.' We were put like animals in a cage.“*

Later in the evening, another „good“ officer came, telling the group: *„I want to help you but I cannot,“* and left.

At around 7pm, the officers asked the individuals:

*„What you have?“*

Then he brought every man from the group with him to a small room, one after another. The officer searched the clothes of the men.

*„He asked for money. I said I don't have money. He even checked in my underwear.“*

The women were not taken to the room, but their bags and purses were searched. One officer found some Euros in one woman's purse. He gave the money to her husband, and ordered:

*„Give police Montenegro money. You pay for drive back to camp.“*

The husbands answered: *„I will pay when I arrive.“*

The officer answered: *„No, I need now. Some days ago, a family had no money, and they had to walk back to Podgorica!“*

The officer points at a Bosnian police car: *„This car police Montenegro. Give him money, police Montenegro good.“*

The husband still refused to hand his money to the officer and the car left.

At around 11 pm, the group were released from their small cells and the officers returned their phones.

The group had to enter two big, black windowless vans, each fitting approximately six persons. With those, they were deported to the Montenegro border crossing at the Ilino Brdo checkpoint.

When they arrived, they asked the Montenegrin authorities for a bus to Podgorica and managed to catch a bus whose last stop was Nikšić. Once arrived there, they didn't have any option to get further.

A Montenegrin officer saw the group at the bus station, asked for their documents and checked their registration papers from the camp in Spuž. The group asked him for help to get to the camp, but he didn't want to help them and left after checking the papers.

At 2 am they decide to take taxis back to Podgorica, where they spend the night outside in front of the camp in Spuž.

**12/04/2019**

**“IN MY COUNTRY THERE IS WAR BUT EVEN THERE WE DON'T TREAT PEOPLE LIKE THIS.”**

**Date and time:** April 12, 2019 16:00

**Location:** Trebinje, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Coordinates:** 42.704168, 18.325152

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 18 person(s), age: 0,6-35 , from: Iraq, Kurdistan

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 9 police officers: 7 with blue uniforms and Bosnian police logo, 2 with black uniforms and Bosnian police emblem on the shoulder. Heavy, high black boots. 2 VW vans, white with a blue stripe.

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, denial of food/water, handcuff

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of 18 left from Nikšić (MIH) around April 10, 2019. They drove close to the Bosnian border and walked from there for two days. Around April 12, the people on the move were trying to reach the bus station of Trebinje (BIH) and got detected by the Bosnian authorities. The nine officers approached them friendly:

*"We will bring you to the police station, and then we will bring you to the Sarajevo camp. You can see doctor."*

*"At first we were surprised, thought maybe they will be nice to us. But they lie to you to calm you down."*

The group had to enter two white, windowless VW vans. They were driven for approximately 30 minutes to the border checkpoint Klobuk, at the border to Montenegro. Once arrived there, they were detained for 16 hours.

*"It was a white room without windows."*

While in the room, one officer took photos of their faces. There were no benches in the room, and they had to knock on the door when they wanted to go to the bathroom. They didn't get water, food or blankets.

At 9 am, the officers entered and handcuffed four of the men. With the handcuffs on, they were again loaded into the two white VW vans, accompanied by the nine police officers. When the group noticed that they were not brought to Sarajevo, they asked the officers:

*"Where are we going? Please give us asylum!"*

But they answered:

*"No English, no asylum, Bosnia full."*

They were driven around 10 minutes on a road up the mountain between the border crossings. While the police let them get off the van, they returned their phones and removed the handcuffs, saying:

*"Walk back to Montenegro."*

A 16-year-old boy told a Bosnian officer:

*"I will tell UN what you are doing!"*

So one officer answered:

*"Fuck your mother! Fuck UN!"*

And kicked the young man with his heavy black boots on the side, so that he fell out of the car on the ground. The officer took a metal baton and beat the young man on his head and he started bleeding heavily from two wounds (see photo).

*"They use heavy metal stick."*

The officers nevertheless started kicking him with their boots in his stomach and chest.

*"He beat me like Jackie Chan. After I felt dizzy, I couldn't stand up and I couldn't speak."*

The officer who targeted who attacked the teenager was described as tall, strong, with a shaved head and blue eyes. When the officer noticed two members of the group filming the scene, he took their two phones and smashed them on the ground. Before the officers left, they told the people on the move:

*"If you come again, it will be worse! We take fingerprints, and we will break your legs and your arms."*

The officers left after around 10 to 15 minutes and the group walked around 30 minutes through the forest to the Ilino Brdo border crossing of Montenegro. There the border officers told them to wait for the public bus to arrive. The group paid for the bus tickets back to Podgorica and went from there to the camp in Spuž.

*"When I came back to camp, even after two days I received no medical assistance. They told me to go to Podgorica to the hospital. But I don't have money for that. There is only one doctor in the camp in Spuž, he is very bad he don't know nothing. He comes two times a week. The nurse is here, but she does not help anything."*

*"In my country there is war but even there we don't treat people like this."*

[https://www.borderviolence.eu/wp-content/uploads/censored\\_small.mp4](https://www.borderviolence.eu/wp-content/uploads/censored_small.mp4)

25/02/2019

## **"YOU KNOW MONTENEGRO POLICE DON'T LOVE BOSNIA POLICE."**

**Date and time:** February 25, 2019 12:00

**Location:** Bileća, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.8756616, 18.42921869999998

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

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

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, handcuffed

**Police involved:** 2 male police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The group of four left Nikšić (MNE) on February 24, 2019. They took a bus to Vilusi (MNE) at the Bosnian border. They crossed the border by foot and slept in a forest for a few hours. Around noon on February 25, they reached the town of Bileća (BIH), where two male police officers noticed the group.

The four of them ran away, all in different directions. The respondent unfortunately ran into a blind alley and was caught. Both officers pushed him to the ground. One put his foot on his neck, the other started to beat him with a baton as the respondent asserted. In one of the houses in the alley, a window was opened, an elderly lady looked out and shouted at the police officers to immediately stop this.

*"This woman saved me!"*

The officers stopped, the respondent got handcuffed, and they were waiting for a car to pick them up. They drove him to the official border control of Deleuša (MNE). There he got asked by the officers to hand them out his money. He told them that he didn't have any money on him beside the money he needed for the bus ticket to bring him back to the next town in Montenegro. The officers threatened him to never come back to Bosnia.

*"If you come back, we break all your bones!"*

After waiting for some time, they handed him over to the border control of Montenegro, without talking to them.

*"You know Montenegro police don't love Bosnia police."*

The Montenegrin authorities asked him what he did to be handcuffed and explained that handcuffing was unusual. They also asked him if he would like to go back to BIH.

When he said yes, the Montenegrin officers actually drove him back to the Bosnian border and he got off the car. He crossed the Bosnian border again and finally made it via Mostar to Sarajevo.

*"The government makes war in our mind. I am here to take a rest."*

23/02/2019

**“I SAID IS IT POSSIBLE TO STAY HERE, THEY SAID NO, NO CHANCE.”**

**Date and time:** February 23, 2019 16:00

**Location:** Gradets, Macedonia, close to Gradets

**Coordinates:** 41.3413533, 22.4479712

**Pushback from:** North Macedonia

**Pushback to:** Greece

**Demographics:** Initially the group were 3, then 2, increasing to 9 later in the incident person(s), age: 20, 24, 26, unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** handcuffed

**Police involved:** Macedonian police officers, caught by 2 and joined by 2 male officers (blue uniforms, pistols, pepper spray, insignia of Macedonian police, blue-white police jeep), some police officers (blue-white van) from a police station and IOM office, one officer in IOM office (in plain clothes)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, personal information taken

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

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

Late February 2019, between February 23 and 27, a group of three crossed the border from Greece to Macedonia by crawling under a barbed wire fence. Afterwards, they walked for around seven hours until nightfall. By that time, they were around two kilometers far from the town of Gradets (MKD). To their right were grape farms and a train track to their left. Suddenly, they saw two to three flashlights on the right side and supposed they might come from the authorities, although they weren't able to see anyone in the dark. Then they heard someone shouting at them, but couldn't understand anything. They started running to the left side, through the grape farms and some officers started chasing them. One of the three got separated from the others, and they later found out that he was caught during the chase and pushed back. The two others continued running for around 30 minutes, first fast, then slower and

slower. When they turned around, they could see the flashlights in a save distance and knew they had escaped successfully.

The group of now two walked for around two kilometers, until they found an abandoned building close to the town of Gradets (MKD) at the approximate coordinates 41.3413533, 22.4479712. As they were very tired, they decided to sleep there. The building was very small, with a single story. Both of them slept in sleeping bags. Around 12 am, they walk up as someone walked into room and saw two officers.

*"Where are you from?"*

*"Pakistan."*

Then the officers talked in Macedonian, which the two individuals didn't understand. The respondent asked if they spoke Russian, one replied 'yes', the other 'no', but both officers spoke English.

They handcuffed both men together with fabric binds and then called someone with a radio phone. The two of them had to wait until two more officers arrived with a blue-white police jeep. All officers wore blue uniforms with the emblem of the Macedonian police on it, pistols and pepper spray. It was around 4 pm, when they had to enter the backspace of the car and were driven for around 20 minutes to a police station.

Inside, they were told to sit in a waiting room. One officer came and asked them again, where they were from, but no other questions were asked. After 10 minutes another officer brought them outside, and they had to enter a blue police van.

They then drove to an IOM office, potentially inside a camp as the respondent saw children playing and a number of temporary cabins. At the office they had to wait for around 5 to 10 minutes and were then asked for their names and nationalities. They further had to give their fingerprints

without being informed about the purpose of it. The respondent expressed his wish to stay in Macedonia but was told that this was not possible.

*"I said is it possible to stay here, they said no, no chance. I said what will you do with us, will you send us back, they said yes of course."*

Afterwards, they got some food and water by a Red Cross staff. A man in plain clothes, who might have been an officer, then asked for their phones. He then left the room and went to another cabin.

*"After 5 minutes he comes back in and tells me 'come', then he took me to a different cabin and then asked me 'whats the code for your phone?' I gave it to him and then he told me to leave."*

The two of them had to wait for 30 minutes in the first cabin with five officers. At this point there were around eight other people on the move, four from India, two from Pakistan and two from Afghanistan. All had to hand over their phones and disclose their passwords. None of them was informed about what exactly they checked on their phones, but the officers asked each of them questions about the people on their photos. The respondent was asked questions specifically about a photo he had of the one of them who got separated from the other two on the previous day. He told the officer, that he had already been pushed back.

Afterwards, the phones were returned to the people on the move. Around 40 minutes later, the same blue van arrived again and they all had to enter its backspace. They were driven for five to ten minutes to the Greek border, around the coordinates 41.1282935, 22.5177522.

At 6 pm the following evening, they were taken out of the van and told to walk through a gate in the border fence. On the other side there were no police officers.

17/02/2019

## “WE WERE TRANSPORTED LIKE ANIMALS”

**Date and time:** February 17, 2019 14:00

**Location:** Klobuk Border Crossing, Bosnia

**Coordinates:** 42.7105268, 18.5464835

**Pushback from:** Bosnia

**Pushback to:** Montenegro

**Demographics:** 6 person(s), age: 23-30 , from: Syria, Iraq, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, threatening with batons

**Police involved:** More than 10 officers in different places in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1 woman, all others men). Most officers wore black uniforms with red-white emblems. Others wore uniforms with the Bosnian flag on the sleeves. Two different police cars (white vans)

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

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

### ORIGINAL REPORT

After having entered Bosnia from Montenegro in the night, the group of four was standing at the side of road M 6.1 near Gacko (BIH), on the 17th of February 2019 (approximate coordinates 43.1744244,18.5178216).

It was around 7 am. They were looking for a taxi to take them further into Bosnia. After a while, a white car stopped and three elderly officers stepped out, wearing heavy footwear and black uniforms with a red-white emblem on their sleeves. They asked the people on the move where they were from, wanted to see their papers and their belongings. The four of them handed over their camp IDs from the camp in Spuzh (MNE), their phones and bags.

Then, the officers searched them and their luggage. Their phones (iPhone 6, Samsung G7, a Samsung and a Huawei phone), chargers and power banks were put into a bag. They also took the pills one of the four had with him, even though he explained that they were not drugs but his medicine.

Afterwards, the four of them had to enter a white van's backspace where they had to sit on the blank floor during the one-hour drive.

*“We were transported like animals.”*

They arrived at the border near Kazanci (BIH) at the coordinates 43.037979, 18.654556. Even though the ride was quite fast, the respondent didn't feel too afraid in the backspace, but felt uncomfortable when there were road bends.

Once they reached the border, an officer went into a small building. After ten minutes he returned to the van, and they were driven to Bileca (BIH) at the coordinates 42.8759458,18.4288576.

After the one-hour drive, they arrived in Bileca and were told to get off the van. Outside, there were three other male and female officers in the same uniforms. The first officers handed them over the bag with the phones. The three new officers took the first phone out of the bag, put it on the ground and, while laughing, crushed it with their shoes. The other phones followed.

The group of four were then told to get into the white van of the Bileca authorities. In the van, there were already two other people on the move. Again, all of them had to sit on the plain floor. After a ten minutes of driving, the car stopped near to a rubbish bin and the respondent saw one of the officers throwing the bag with the crushed phones, chargers, powerbanks and medicine into the bin. They continued the drive until they reached a small police station at the border post of Klobuk (BIH) at around 2 pm (see on the map).

There, they were locked into three rooms, two in each. They asked for food and something to drink. The officers, wearing uniforms with no red-white emblems but with the Bosnian flag, brought them water but denied the food as the respondent asserted.

*"In general they were friendly."*

The group of now six were explained that they had to wait for a regular bus that would take them across the border to Niksic (MNE). When the bus arrived – it was a regular Bosnian bus with Bosnian plates – the officers from Bileca told the six of them to buy a ticket for €5 from the driver with their own money. One of the two individuals who the other ones just had met in the police van in Bileca had no money with him. The officer told the other five individuals to pay for his ticket as well.

*"We said no, we do not even know him. The police should pay for him."*

But one of the officers pulled out a stick and threatened to beat them if they would refuse to pay. When one of the men gave the bus driver a ten Euro bill and waited for the change, the latter just kept the money and said that this was the payment for the sixth ticket. He and the officers ignored their objections. In the bus, there were around ten persons.

When they reached the Montenegrin side of the border, the border guards checked all passengers' documents. One of the other passengers had a Chinese passport, the others were probably Bosnian and Montenegrin citizens, according to the respondent. The people on the move showed their camp IDs which the Montenegrin officers checked without comments. The bus arrived to Niksic (MNE) at the coordinates 42.7732902,18.9131029 in the afternoon around 3 pm.

In order to reach their camp, the group of four had to take another bus to Podgorica and then a taxi for 20 minutes to the camp of Spuzh.

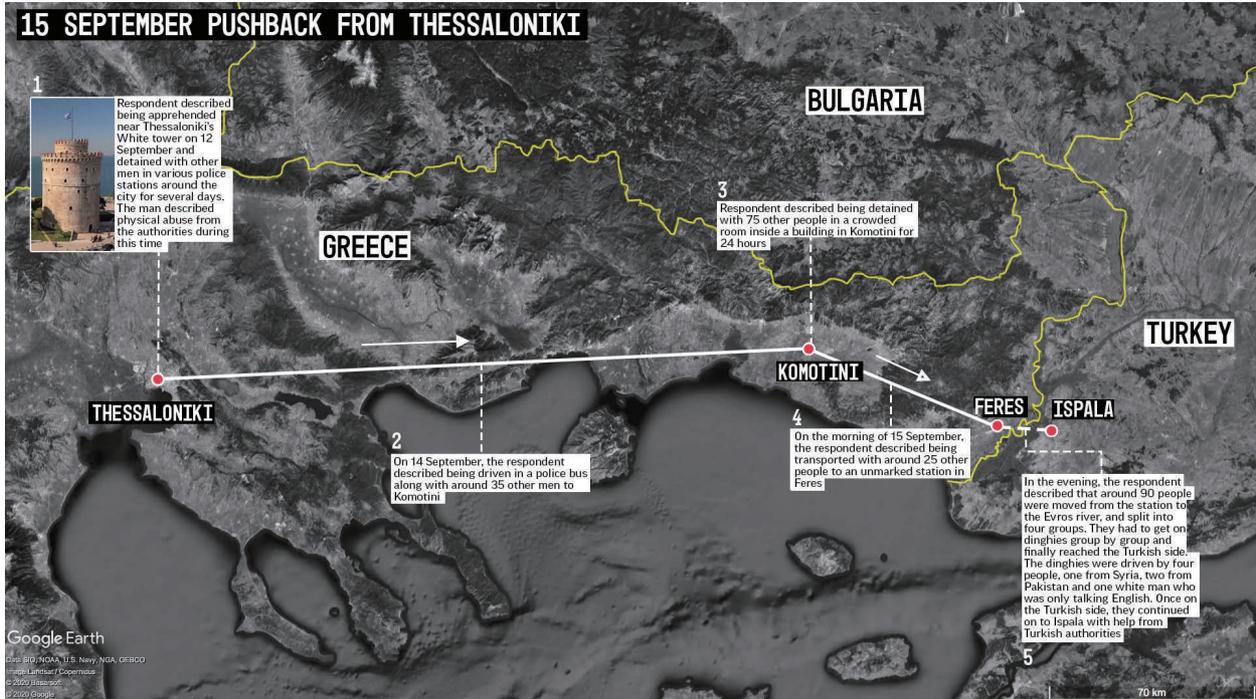
# GREECE



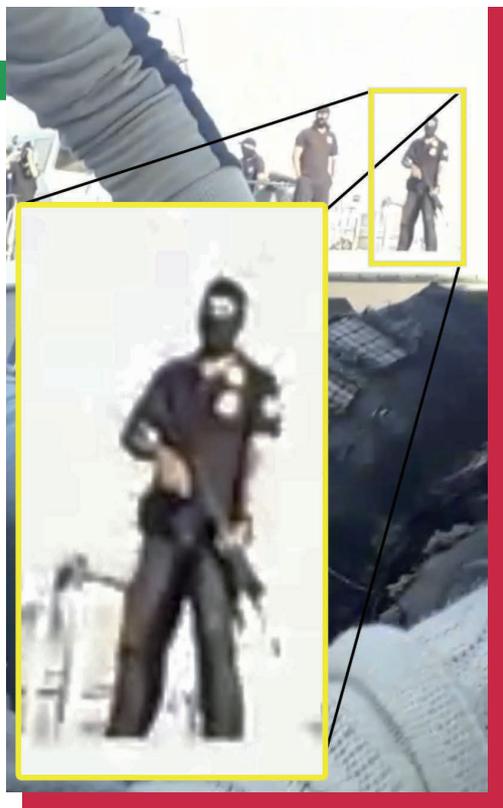
The Greece-Turkey border has become a key point of entry into the EU, both via the Aegean Sea and the Evros river border. In 2015, Greece became the site of the third largest humanitarian intervention in the world[1] when numbers of incoming TCNs skyrocketed. Whilst human rights violations were proliferating before this, it was in this complex and politically-charged environment that watchdogs started reporting on the practice of pushbacks in Greece's border zones. In 2018, human rights groups published a comprehensive report[2] dubbed 'the new normality' on pushbacks across the Evros river. Over the past four years, Greece has developed an increasingly repressive regime against POM, a phenomenon that was enhanced with the 2019 election of the right wing Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy) party.

In January 2020 the new International Protection Act[3] (IPA) entered into force, amended 5 months later in May 2020[4], transposing key EU directives into national legislation and imposing stricter migration provisions. The bill introduced provisions lowering protection standards incompatible with the CEAS, in clear violation of the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights and other international protection instruments Greece has ratified. The IPA contains provisions for individuals caught crossing the border 'illegally' to be subjected to accelerated procedures and possible detention. The duration of detention is 18 months while in the asylum procedure, with the possibility for extension of an additional 18 months for the purpose of removal. Increased mandates have been given to border guards[5] and military personnel, with no training in guaranteeing respect for fundamental rights. In March 2020, the Greek government suspended the right to apply for asylum for a period of one month[6]. Combined with restrictions imposed under the current pandemic, access to apply for asylum has been severely impeded for new arrivals in Greece.





Since BVMN established presence in the region in 2019, network members on the ground - Mobile Info Team, Josoor and Mare Liberum - have documented 58 pushback events which have affected approximately 2,900 individuals. This year, BVMN noted that almost 90% of all Greek pushback testimonies contained one or more types of torture or ill-treatment. Of increasing concern is the indiscriminate nature of this abuse with up to 52% of all pushback groups subject to forms of torture and ill-treatment containing minors. During pushbacks, groups are apprehended in Greek territory and held in incommunicado detention sites[7] across militarised border areas and exposed to violence in episodes of prolonged beatings, often by officers wearing black uniforms and balaclavas. In the case of the Evros border, detained groups varying from 50 to 150 individuals are later transferred to the riverside and, once it is ascertained there are no border guards on the Turkish side, they are ferried across the river in rubber dinghies. Notable trends that have emerged over BVMN's reporting include apprehension and pushback of groups from deep into the mainland, e.g. in Thessaloniki, and outsourcing the role of driving the dinghies across the Evros river to POM in order to avoid interactions with the Turkish authorities. .



Photos from previous page, from top (all Turkey to Greece):  
 Baton marks on back, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/april-16-2020-0000-meric-river-grk-tur/>  
 Severe back bruising, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/june-21-2020-2100-ipsala-edirne-turkey/>  
 Torso injury, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/may-16-2020-0000-ladochori-greece/>  
 Photo from this page  
 Armed HCG officer, Turkey to Greece, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/bvmn-investigations-analysis-of-video-footage-showing-involvement-of-hellenic-coast-guard-in-maritime-pushback/>



HCG vessel, BVMN: <https://www.borderviolence.eu/bvmn-investigations-analysis-of-video-footage-showing-involvement-of-hellenic-coast-guard-in-maritime-pushback/>

Testimonies surrounding the Aegean Sea record an unprecedented increase in both violence and scale throughout 2020. Video evidence suggests a new tactic deployed by the Greek Coastguard (HCG), involving abandoning groups on inflatable life rafts without engines or means to navigate[8]. Initially arising in individual cases, this has become a systematic tactic used across all Aegean islands, with those already ashore taken back to sea and abandoned. According to data analysed by BVMN at least 5,000 individuals were pushed back in the Aegean during the first eight months of this year[9]. The Greek government boasts that it has prevented more than 10,000 entries by sea from Turkey, but its official line is the denial that pushbacks are taking place altogether[10].

*Written by Hope Barker (BVMN),  
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Natalie Gruber (Josoor)  
and Disinfo Collective*

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- 2 Greek Council for Refugees, ARSIS, and Human Rights 360. (2018).** The New Normality: Continuous pushbacks of third-country nationals on the Evros river. Available: <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1028-the-new-normality-continuous-push-backs-of-third-country-nationals-on-the-evros-river> [Accessed 19/11/2020].
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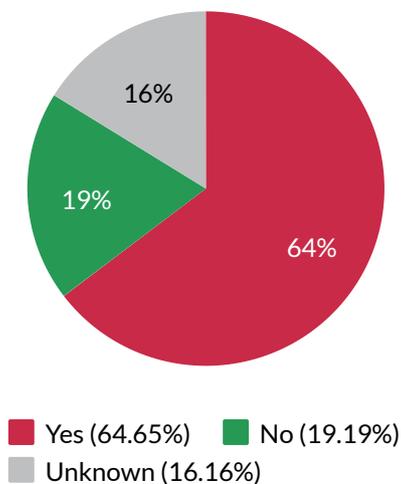
# STATISTICS

## Testimonies of pushbacks in Greece

Year	Number of testimonies	Affected persons
<b>Overall</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>3,632</b>
2017	0	0
2018	0	0
2019	6	75
2020	67	3,557

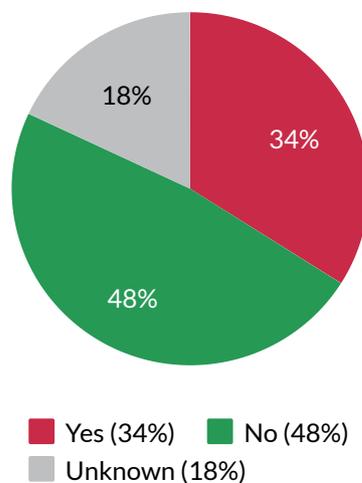
### Pushbacks involving minors in Greece

Percentage of testimonies in which at least one affected person was under 18 years old



### Intention to ask for asylum in Greece

Percentage of testimonies in which the affected people were pushed back, even though they expressed an intention to seek international protection.



14/11/2020

**“SOMETIMES THEY HIT YOU WITH THE BATON, FOR NOTHING. JUST LIKE THAT. FOR HAVING FUN MAYBE.”**

**Date and time:** November 14, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Dilofos/Kapikule

**Coordinates:** 41.688887680067, 26.391274787402

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 90 person(s), age: 9 months to 60 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, water immersion, threatening with guns, theft of personal belongings, deliberate stepping on arms

**Police involved:** 5 in Greek police uniform, 15-20 “masked men” wearing balaclavas most Greek but one speaking Italian and two speaking Arabic, four in green uniform; unknown number of Turkish soldiers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent and a group of five men (Tunisian, Palestinian, Syrian and Libyan) crossed the Evros river at several different points close from Edirne city and gathered again on the Greek side. They walked for one day and night and passed several villages until they found a place to sleep in a forest. On the 13th of November, they were just about to turn on their phones to see on a map where they were but within a few seconds, six men carrying guns surrounded them and asked them who they were and what they were doing there. Some of them were wearing Greek police uniforms, some were not wearing official uniforms but black clothes. They had arrived in a black car. The group was ordered to get on the ground. “*You are refugees? What are you doing here!*”, the armed men proclaimed as they started hitting them with batons. The respondent describes how the officers hit him and the other four on their backs and arms and even told them to lie down on the ground with their arms stretched out and proceeded to walk over their arms and hands.

The officers then took their phones and all other belongings.

*“One of them talked to us in English. One of the guys in our group speaks Italian and one of the other officers spoke Italian to him.”*

Then, two more cars arrived. It was between 10 and 15 officers in total at this point.

*"Some of them carried flashlights and put them in our faces to see who we are. They kept asking us for our nationalities. Then, as always, they started to hit us while putting us in the car."*

They drove for around two hours, maybe less. They then arrived at a detention site and appeared to be an official police prison. The group was searched and forced to undress. They were subsequently taken into a room which was empty at the time of their arrival and which the respondent describes had a really bad stench. There were no mattresses or anything to rest on. After two hours, more people were brought in. Every hour or two hours, the door opened and more people were taken in. At the end, forty or fifty people were gathered.

The officers at the detention site were dressed in green uniforms. Some spoke English but not well.

The people in the room were very hungry and thirsty and kept asking for food. There were also several toddlers who were hungry. They did not receive food or water and were kept there for one day and night, a bit more than 24 hours.

When there were more than thirty people, the room was so crowded that the people inside could not move anymore. All of them had to stand and yet it was too crowded.

Among the people detained there were many nationalities. Pakistani, Afghans, Syrians, Tunisian, Algerian, Moroccan, Iraqi and possibly others.

There were also several women and children. Some were as young as two and three years, others up to 15. There was also one old man, the respondent estimates his age to be around 65 years.

*"I don't remember how many children there were in total. Many. We tried to help this one family with four kids. The eldest was 10, the youngest two years old. There was even a baby, nine months or ten months old."*

They were detained for more than 24 hours, then some cars arrived. *"Again, they beat us with batons while telling us to get into the cars."*

On the 14th of November, officers were wearing normal clothes and black balaclavas in three big cars, rather vans. They put a lot of people inside them. In the van the respondent was forced to enter, there were between 20 and 30 people. *"It was too much, way too much!"* he proclaims.

There had been two rooms filled with people in that detention site and so there were many people in all three cars. *"They humiliated us. They told us 'you are animals, you deserve this' while they put us in the cars."*

They drove for around one hour until they arrived at the point of pushback, close from the Evros river. All of the three cars arrived there and one big military truck.

There were many officers there. Some were wearing normal clothes, some green uniforms. The soldiers told people to get down, make a line and be quiet – “as always” says the respondent.

*“Sometimes they hit you with the baton, for nothing. Just like that. For having fun maybe.”*

There were at least five soldiers and at least ten men wearing balaclavas, some of whom spoke Arabic. Two of them searched the group again.

Then the officers started pushing the people back to Turkey. *“They put you in the small boat. They take you in. Then, in the middle of the river, they tell you to jump. And then you jump. We don’t know if it’s deep or not, they tell you to jump and you have to jump. This is how you cross the border. But sometimes you get stuck. You meet the Turkish army. They also hit you and tell you to go back to Greece. Sometimes you get lucky.”*

In this case, the group met Turkish soldiers and were beaten very hard on their heads, upper bodies and legs with batons. The soldiers also used their rifles to hit them on their heads. *“It was like they meant to kill us.”* Then the soldiers ordered the group to go back into the river.

*“We were stuck on a small island in the middle of the river for two days. We were stuck. No water, no food. We were hopeless. Some guys were taken by the river when they tried to get back.”*

During the pushback from Greece to Turkey the respondent estimates the number of people to have been between 90 and 100. On this island, it was only him and five others as most of the others had managed to run away. But in the morning, they found a family had been hiding behind some trees on the same island.

*“We stayed there for two days, hiding from both sides, Greek and Turkish. Trying to find the right time and way to cross and get back to Turkish land.”*

Eventually they managed to cross and were able to hide from the Turkish soldiers.

*“We walked to Edirne by foot because the Greek officers took all we had – money, phones, everything. We couldn’t take a car, bus or taxi. We had to walk like 16km from the pushback spot to Edirne. It was like 3 hours walking. I was injured very badly so I had to rest often... but I had to get here to crash and have some rest.”*

The following pictures show injuries the respondent and one of his friends sustained during the pushback:

08/11/2020

## “WE WILL RELEASE YOU SOON, JUST WAIT”

**Date and time:** November 8, 2020 00:00

**Location:** near Ipsala

**Coordinates:** 40.941282, 26.351559

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 150 person(s), age: 28 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, unidentified Arab countries

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, handcuffs, denial of food and water

**Police involved:** 4 Greek police officers in Thessaloniki, 12 Greeks police officers in Evros region (wearing grey khaki uniforms with Greek flags sewed), 2 white unlabelled vans, 1 green bus, other large vehicles

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water, theft of money, theft of personal belongings

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the morning of November 8th, 2020, at around 12:00 the respondent, a 28 year old man from Pakistan, was with a group of other 5 Pakistani men at the bus station of Thessaloniki, trying to buy a ticket to travel from Thessaloniki to Athens. Reportedly, because of his precarious position being undocumented and having crossed into Greece rather recently, he was standing outside of the station ticket office, in the covered area where buses park and load, while others were buying the ticket for him.

While in the premises of the bus station, the group was approached by two men claiming to be police officers, but who were wearing civilian clothes with no recognizable insignia and arrived driving an unlabelled white van. The two asked the respondent to show his documents, but since he had none, they handcuffed him and made him sit. The same happened to the rest of the group. Shortly after another couple of police officers in civilian clothes arrived, driving a similar vehicle.

The group was made to enter the back of the vans and drove away for approximately 15 to 20 minutes, before arriving at a location that the respondent called a “jail” and a “police station”, at around 13:00. The group was quickly brought up to the first floor of the building.

Once inside, the group was made to undress, they were searched and their belongings were seized, including money, mobile phones and precious objects. The group was then made to enter a closed room without windows and sit there for some hours, without food or water. In the room, they met 15 other people, all men, some from Arabic countries and some from

Afghanistan. A few hours later, the respondent recalled the police officers giving them their clothes back, but not their belongings.

Afterwards, a man wearing civilian clothes entered the room where the people were imprisoned and, according to the respondent, told them *"We will release you soon, just wait"*. Then, when it was already late in the evening, all the people were taken out of the room and led outside of the building, where a large green bus was waiting parked inside the premises of the police station.

From a cross-reference of the details collected, including the driving distances between the place of apprehension and the description of the premises of the building, it is possible to assume that the police station in question might have been the Border Police station of Agiou Athanasiou, located in a small and secluded municipality on the north-western outskirts of Thessaloniki metropolitan area.

The bus drove for about 4 or 5 hours, before reaching another unidentified location, described as an "open place" that was under the surveillance of around 10 or 15 other policemen, including one woman officer, all wearing grey-khaki uniforms with Greek flags sewed on, and speaking in Greek to one another. Known places of detention in that region are Tycherio, Kipi and Feres. The respondent recalled spending around 1 or 2 hours in that place, where a total of 150 people was confined, including women and children, before all the people were made to enter many large vehicles that were parked in the surrounding area. During that time, the people were only given water to drink, but still nothing to eat.

After a ride of approximately 15 or 20 minutes, they reached the Evros/Meriç river in an area that the respondent recalled to be in the proximity of the Turkish district of İpsala. The police officers who drove them, who during the whole time were wearing masks to cover their faces, led them to a wooden boat moored close by. The people marched as ordered through the woods, barefooted, and were made to cross the river with multiple trips on the boat. The respondent noted the cruelty with which the policemen left them insufficiently dressed for the cold weather conditions.

All through these events, the respondent repeatedly expressed his intention to ask for asylum in Greece, but his demands were ignored.

**03/11/2020**

## **"MY SON WAS CRYING SO MUCH, HE WAS FREEZING AND SO AFRAID OF THE RIVER"**

**Date and time:** November 3, 2020 21:00

**Location:** Close from Tycherio

**Coordinates:** 41.029765070931, 26.331938240152

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 65 person(s), age: 3-50 , from: Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** water immersion, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 6 in Greek uniform, 2 in civilian clothes, 8 wearing black clothes and balaclavas (all speaking Greek) and 2 in civilian clothes and balaclavas (not speaking at all)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On October 28, the respondent crossed the Evros river by boat close from Ipsala at the Turkish/Greek border with her 3 year old son and 10 men.

When they arrived on the Greek side, the group separated. The respondent, her son and her boyfriend continued alone by foot. They walked for several days and on the sixth day, at 4pm, they arrived in Komotini and asked locals for food. They received some food and continued on their way. Around 30min later, they were stopped by two men in dark blue police uniforms who had arrived in a Greek police car and had "police" written on their backs. The officers asked if the respondent or her boyfriend spoke English. When they said no, the officers handcuffed the respondents boyfriend but not the respondent herself. The officers then made a call and started to search them. About 15min after the call, a big white vehicle came, carrying two men in civilian clothes. The officers removed the handcuffs and the men dressed in civilian clothes searched the respondents boyfriend but not the respondent herself. They took his phone and money (100€) but not his bag. The respondent and her family were ordered to get into the car. It did not have any seats and no windows. They drove for around 20-30min. The car stopped directly in front of a door of a detention site. Since the vehicle had no windows, the respondent could not see the building from the outside. However, previous reports allow the assumption that the respondent referred to the **Tychero border police department**.

When they entered, they found themselves in a hallway where three officers in Greek police uniform were searching several other men. The respondents boyfriend too was ordered to undress and was searched while the respondent was taken to another room and searched by a female officer. The officers took all their belongings from them – the bag containing clothes, their power bank and some more money. Then they were taken into a room filled with around 65 people. The respondent remembers Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, Syrians, Egyptians, Afghans, and three other children as well as three other women.

They spent 1 or 2 hours in that room which the respondent believes was around 5x5meters in size. It had no furniture or anything and was so crowded that most people had to stand. Others got up so the respondent and her son could sit down.

Then, three men wearing black clothes and balaclavas carrying sticks (the respondent described as branches from a tree) and guns entered – in addition to the three uniformed officers – and told the whole group to exit the facility. There were three big vehicles in front of the door but the respondent could not describe details as they were not allowed to look up. The families and women were ordered to get into one of the vehicles, the single men in the other

two. It did not have any windows but it did have seats. The masked men drove very fast and recklessly, the whole ride lasted for around 45min.

The cars stopped in the forest next to Evros river. There were five or six other men in black clothes and balaclavas waiting. The whole group was searched again, including the women, all by men. There was one light-grey rubber dinghy waiting as well. Two men dressed in civilian clothes and wearing balaclavas drove the dinghy but did not speak anything so the respondent could not guess their nationality. In groups of around 12 people each, they were taken into the boat. The boat then took them a few meters into the river but only to stop very soon. Then, one of the two drivers got into the water and signaled everyone else to get out of the boat as well. The water at this spot reached until the hip of the adult men. They had to cross the rest of Evros by foot, the water getting up to the chest in the middle of the river while there the current was really strong. The respondent describes that they had to walk carefully so as not to get carried away by the current.

*“My son was crying so much, he was freezing and so afraid of the river”.*

On the Turkish side, they walked for about 15min when they were apprehended by Turkish soldiers carrying machine guns. The soldiers told the families they could leave but ordered the single men to cross back to Greece.

The respondent and her family walked a bit further and eventually found a taxi that took them to Istanbul.

01/11/2020

## “IF YOU RUN AWAY, YOU WILL GET INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE”

**Date and time:** November 1, 2020 19:00

**Location:** Ditymoteicho

**Coordinates:** 41.3476492, 26.4956372

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 40 person(s), age: unknown , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria, DR Congo

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), threatening with guns, theft of personal belongings, poor air during car ride

**Police involved:** At least 13 police officers dressed in the Greek uniform, at least 4 “masked men” and 6-8 Turkish military

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, 26 and from Morocco, had recently arrived in Greece with three other Moroccans prior to the pushback. They had traveled from Meriç in Turkey and stayed there for one night the following day before they crossed to Greece. They then walked through a forest and lots of hills for 2.5 days until they arrived in a village.

They were running out of food and so two people from the group went to find some food in the village, while the other two, including the respondent, hid. They did not come back for 3 hours, so the others decided that they must have been caught and carried on without them. They walked for another 2.5 days, living off the little amount of food they had left. They walked for 10km down a highway until they reached a lorry park near **Lasmos**.

They both decided to hide underneath one of the trucks. They arrived at the lorry park at 7pm and got onto the lorry at 4am. They lay on the metal bar that joins the wheels together. After three hours, they arrived in Thessaloniki.

When they arrived in Thessaloniki, the respondents' friend wanted to go to the camp. But the respondent refused as he believed the police would have caught them. So they decided to stay in a hotel for two nights.

The respondents' family wanted to send money from Morocco, but the respondent needed someone who had a white card. He met someone who knew from Istanbul in Thessaloniki. They went to the Western Union together, and were apprehended by three police officers who were dressed in civilian clothes.

His friend who went to the Western Union with him told the respondent not to run as last time they took his white card. His friend continued to explain and said: "*If you run away, you will get into a lot of trouble*". So they did not run. The three police asked where they were from, and they lied and said they were Palestinian, not Moroccan. The police took them to the police station in a normal white police patrol car. This police station had three cells, the respondent was in one of them with no windows or toilets.

Three more police in the station made them take off their clothes and took everything from them. These police officers were dressed in Greek police uniforms. They spent one night in the police station.

After this, the next morning, three police took them to another police station in Kavala. They stayed there for one night and were made to wait while police brought more and more people there. There were about 14-16 people in his cell when the respondent was taken there. By the end of the day there were at least 40 people. The following day they were taken to a detention facility near Didymoteicho by a white car. The centre was crowded and the respondent slept on the ground and was deprived of food. The police here were dressed in black uniforms with no identification on the outside and were wearing balaclavas.

At around 7pm, when it got dark, they were pushed back to Turkey. There were 8 people in the respondents boat, including himself, which was driven by one Afghani and one Syrian. The rest of the people were taken 7 by 7. They took them across the river, but dropped the people in the middle of the river and made them jump in and cross the rest by themselves.

When they arrived on the Turkish side, the Turkish military were waiting for them. They were greeted nicely by the military who made them a fire, gave them food and water. But after about half an hour, they were told they needed to go back to Greece. On foot, without a boat. The respondent told the military he did not know how to swim, so he refused and pretended he had health issues. In response to this, one of the Turkish military soldiers started to hit him with the base of his gun. The respondent lifted himself up and left along with his friend and some women and children.

They walked for an hour and found a car in a small village. The driver charged them €100 each for a ride to Istanbul, of which he paid with money he borrowed from a friend when he arrived in Istanbul.

**27/10/2020**

## **“I CAN’T SWIM, IF I CROSSED THE RIVER I WOULD DIE.”**

**Date and time:** October 27, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Soufli/Meriç

**Coordinates:** 41.1943451, 26.2992566

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 80 person(s), age: 1-70 , from: Syria, Morocco, Egypt

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, water immersion, theft of personal belongings, reckless driving

**Police involved:** 6 Greek policemen in blue uniforms, minimum four masked men wearing black, two vans, two German cars and two Romanian hatchback vehicles. 20 Turkish police officers.

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

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

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

This pushback included 80-90 people who were pushed back from Greece to Turkey. The group of people included families, women, babies, children and elderly people, with the ages ranging from babies/ toddlers (approx 1 years old to 3 years old) and up to elderly people (approx 60-70 years old).

The respondent was apprehended in **Mandra**. He had crossed with six people: two Moroccan women, three Moroccan men and one Algerian man. They were trying to follow GPS on the respondents phone, but it did not work. They all ended up splitting up and the respondent stayed with the Algerian man. The two of them ended up lost in a forest for five days and then went their separate ways.

The respondent went to a village near Mandra where someone helped him and gave him some food, but said *"please do not stay here, because if the police come I will get in trouble"*. He then went to another village where a woman helped him. She gave him some food, water and directed him to a bus stop. While he was waiting for the bus to arrive, there were some police cars nearby that he did not notice. When the bus arrived, he spoke to the driver and asked for a ticket to Thessaloniki, speaking in German and English to pretend that he was a tourist. The bus driver said the ticket will be 40 euros, so the respondent paid and while waiting for the change the police that had been watching him, apprehended him. Three policemen took him, all dressed in dark blue uniforms.

The police took him to a small detention site on the other side of the highway. It was just one room with no cells. There were 10 other people in there. The police changed shifts and three more came in, dressed in dark blue uniforms. The respondent met an Egyptian man who had been able to hide his phone in his jacket. The respondent took the phone and went into the toilets to take three short videos of one German car, Opel, and two Romanian hatchback vehicles. The respondent does not have the videos as he did not see the Egyptian man again who still has the phone. The police took the respondents jacket and threw it in the bin. He also told them he was Egyptian, because he believes that if he said he was Moroccan, they would have hit him.

He stayed for an hour before he was taken by a police car, which was a white Mercedes, to a police station. Then at night, men dressed in black and wearing balaclavas came and took him in a vehicle similar to the previous white van. The respondent claims that there were 60 people inside this vehicle. It was dark and the officers were driving fast and turning sharply which meant people in the van were hitting into each other and getting hurt. The respondent believes that this driving was deliberate. The policemen drove like this for an hour before they arrived at the Evros river.

When they arrived, they were told not to talk. Another vehicle of the same type arrived which carried about 30 people. Everyone was gathered on the river bank. Approximately 80-90 people were gathered – old women, kids, different nationalities, all together. The respondent specifically remembers a Syrian family. The policemen searched them again before they loaded them onto a boat. A Syrian man and an Afghan man were driving the boat to the other side.

The men were sending them in groups of 12 in a boat. But, when they were crossing the river, the Syrian and Afghan did not take them all the way to the other side. The boat stopped in the middle of the river and the drivers forced them out of the boat. The water level was up to a grown man's chest. But the water was running fast and the current was strong so they all had to walk slowly because if they walked fast, the current would take them away. The children were carried across by the people who were able to stand. *"All the people cried, the kids cried, the women cried, people were cold"* he explained.

When they arrived on the other side in Turkey, there were lots of people. After walking for a while on the Turkish side, they were caught by 20 Turkish policemen. The policemen gave them water and bread and took the families, women and kids by car. The respondent was not sure where the families were going but it seemed that they were sent back to the city where they came from.

The Turkish police took 20 single men, including the respondent, and walked them to the shore of the river. The police said *"you will go back to Greece"*. The respondent and the others refused

but the police demanded. The respondent has difficulty in breathing so he pretended that he couldn't breathe. One policeman hit him with a gun on his chest. When he fell down, another came and kicked him in the head. He was hit on his back with a stick three times until the stick broke. He fell further and rolled but a tree stopped him. But he still continued to pretend to struggle to breathe. But then, a policeman said to another guy "take him and go to Istanbul". He said thank you to the respondent, stating that "because of you I can go back to Istanbul. I can't swim, if I crossed the river I would die".

18/10/2020

## "APPREHENDED AND PUSHED BACK AFTER RECEIVING FOOD AND MEDICAL CARE"

**Date and time:** October 18, 2020 23:30

**Location:** 20 kilometres away from Ipsala

**Coordinates:** 40.993748311722, 26.350796123794

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 80 person(s), age: 15-50 , from: Pakistan, Iraq, Libya

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4-6 men wearing balaclavas and green uniforms, speaking English and Greek to each other. One big black car with no windows

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 20 year old man from Libya, was arrested together with a fellow countryman around 6:30pm on the 16th of October 2020 at a railroad crossing close to Roxanis street in Thessaloniki, Greece. He had just arrived in Thessaloniki one day before, and had gone to the industrial area outside the city center in order to receive food, clothing, and medical care by two well-known organizations which are operating there. After the food distribution he was leaving the area together with three other men, whom two of them managed to run away when the police arrived. The respondent described that six policemen, four dressed in civilian clothes and two dressed in blue police uniforms, arrived by three cars, two of them coming out of each car. One of the cars was a "normal police car", while the other two, a black car and a white big van with two small windows, were not displaying any police signs. The respondent recalls, that once the police officers got out of the car, they started to beat him and the other man with sticks on their heads and shoulders before they put both of them into the white van. They were then driving for what the respondent estimates to be 15 to 20 minutes until they

reached a police station. The van entered through a big gate and the respondent and the other Libyan man had to walk up a staircase to the first floor.

At the police station, the respondent describes that a woman, who was wearing civilian clothes but carrying a gun, was "registering" him because she asked for his name and surname. Afterwards the police officers who arrested him and the woman took away his personal belongings, which included food, clothes, a phone and charger, as well as 50 Euros. The respondent states he has not been given his belongings back at any time during the pushback. Another person that was arrested and spoke Arabic and English translated for the respondent to the police that he is from Libya and would like to apply for Asylum in Greece, the police did not respond to this.

He was then put into the cell, where he was staying alone for the first day, and accompanied by Syrian, Iraqi and Pakistani people on the second day. He recalls there were a total of 16 people. On his first day in the cell, he did not receive any food or water, even though he asked for the food in his backpack, and only when the other people arrived, the police gave him some money to eat, with which he bought a sandwich and a Coca-Cola. Due to that, he fell sick with stomach pain and nausea, which based on his impression caused the police to call the ambulance, which did not arrive. Because of the pain and the overall situation, the respondent was screaming which is why the police told him that he will also get his Khartia (note issued by the police that allows the holders who are third-country national to stay in Greece until the registration of their asylum application) and be then released from the station. They also gave him some pills against the pain, which the respondent swallowed without knowing what kind of pills they exactly were. After 3 days (October 19th), the respondent and the other 16 people were put into a van that looked exactly like the one that brought him from the railroad tracks to the police station. He estimated the drive took about two and a half hours. Only one officer in civilian clothes was driving the van. The respondent also states that another van brought people from the same police station to the second, and estimates that around 25 people in total have been brought there. He was the youngest person in his van and it was only men.

The other man from Libya who has been arrested together with the respondent, was released at the same day from the police station after the validity of his Khartia was checked by the police woman.

Once the respondent and the other men arrived at the second location, they were body searched by two men dressed in civilian clothes with electric tasers and shotguns on their belts. Their shoes and most of their clothes were taken away. They were then brought into a room, with around 80 people inside, who the respondent describes as being of different nationalities and ages, including families, men, women and children of the age of 15 to 50 years old. The situation in the room was described by the respondent as "very bad" because the room was very dirty and people were drinking water from the toilet because no water has been provided by the officers. The respondent himself asked the officers for food but did not get any response.

At midnight, after what the respondent estimates to be 3 hours at the location, a car picked up the people and drove them within 20 minutes to the river bank. The respondent describes that the car was black, had no windows, and resembled an Opel, which is usually used for transporting chicken or meat. A lot of people have been put inside the car, and because it was very dark he was not able to see anything inside.

When the respondent and the other people left the car at the river bank, four to six men in balaclavas, wearing green clothes with no insignia on them and carrying electric tasers and guns which the respondent said resembled Kalaschnikows were behaving "very violent", beating everyone who was looking at their faces, did not sit down really quickly or did not follow their orders. They were beating them with metal sticks, the back of their guns and they were using electric tasers. The respondent describes that the men "did not care" were they beat them, and hit them on their faces and heads as well. He himself was hit in the face, from which he received a broken nose. The respondent speaks a little bit of English and said that the officers were talking Greek and English to each other. The people were then in groups of 10 to 12 people put into a grey dinghy, which drove them to the middle of the river. From there they had to get off and continue to the Turkish side of the river by swimming. The respondent says that some people were afraid that they would die because they did not know how to swim. He further recalls that two men from Pakistan were driving the boat, he bases this assumption on the way they looked and the fact that they were not speaking Arabic. Women and children were deported to Turkey at the end, and kept separately from the men at the river bank.

After the respondent reached the Turkish side of the river, he walked for eight hours to a town called Ipsala, which he says was about 20 kilometres away from the location he was pushed back. He made this journey without shoes or proper clothing, and no food or water.

16/10/2020

## "THEY DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEND ME BACK"

**Date and time:** October 16, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Soufli/Meriç

**Coordinates:** 41.1943451, 26.2992566

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 100 single men person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** All Greek: minimum 12 in blue uniform, minimum four in civilian clothes, 7 in camouflage; white vans, riot bus

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent arrived in Thessaloniki in September, got registered as an asylum seeker and received a white card ("Khartia"). He was alone in a park around the train station of Thessaloniki on October 13 when he was apprehended by police. Four or five police officers in dark blue

uniforms who arrived on motorbikes and cars. They asked him for his documents and he showed them his white card. The officers told him to take his clothes off and hit him.

Afterwards the respondent was taken into a white car and taken to a police station where he was hit again and then taken to another police station on a mountain in Thessaloniki.

There, he was put into a cell with 10 other men. They were kept there for two days. They did receive food and water. The respondent was told by police officers that he would be given his white card and would be released. One of the other men was indeed given his white card and released.

Then, during day time, all the remaining men were taken out of the cell and into a white car with seats. After a 30min drive, they were transferred onto a blue bus instead. In that bus, there were three policemen in blue uniform and one in civilian clothes as well as a total of 90 to 100 other people. The respondent describes that the bus had metal bars in it. This bus took them to a detention site at the border. It consisted of several small rooms and one big cell. There were several police officers present, some uniformed and some in civilian clothes. The whole group was ordered to undress and the officers proceeded to beat them, mostly with sticks and sometimes with hands. The respondent then had to stay in this big cell for one hour. By now, it was night. The officers then returned some of the clothes: boxers, T- Shirts and shoes without strings. The respondent was then told to get into a white car together with around 20 other people, all men from Morocco and Syria. Two officers were with the group as well. When they stopped at the Evros river, there were six or seven officers. Three of them were wearing green camouflage clothes, the others had blue uniforms. There were also two Syrians that were driving the boat to Turkey.

The respondent assumed that these Syrians have to do this work and in exchange receive a white card, food and a phone and then a paper that allows them to continue their journey later. He stated that a friend of his did this job before.

The respondent had to get into the plastic dinghy with five others and the Syrians drove them to the Turkish side. After walking for a while, they found a hospital. It was in Meric. The respondent wanted to get treatment but there was a police station closeby and several Turkish police officers came and caught them. They detained them for three days. On the first day, they did not receive any food, afterwards they did. On the third day they were released and returned to Istanbul.

The respondent still had injuries that were still bleeding when the testimony was taken four days after the pushback.

Throughout the interview, the respondent kept saying: *"They don't have the right to send me back"*

13/10/2020

## ““IT WAS REALLY FULL, AND WE COULDN'T BREATHE” ”

**Date and time:** October 13, 2020 08:30

**Location:** near to Serem, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.327006, 26.509007

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 60 person(s), age: 29 , from: Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Police in civilian clothing and army officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, 29-year-old Moroccan man, was apprehended on October 12th, 2020, at 9pm, at the Thessaloniki bus station (**K.T.E.A.**). Four Greek policemen in blue police uniforms asked him for his papers, and as he responded that he didn't have any, they proceeded to handcuff him with metal handcuffs and forced him into a small Greek police car with a police logo on it.

They drove for half an hour to a Greek police station close to the sea, most probably the Kalamaria police department (Taxiarchon 1, Kalamaria 551 32). This police station had three cells inside. At the police station, the respondent was given food, water and access to toilets. When he arrived, Greek police officers checked the respondent's clothes, bags and pockets. He was then put into a cell with 7 men from Afghanistan, all in their twenties.

The afghan men were asked to give their fingerprints and were taken to a camp. The respondent was never asked for his fingerprints. After spending the night in the station, at 11am the next day, the respondent was taken to a big blue bus.

The bus was described by the respondent as big and blue, with metal chairs inside and wire netting all over the windows. The bus was filled with approximately 20 men from Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The majority of the men were from Afghanistan. Three officers in civilian clothing were with them on the bus.

They drove for three hours to a place close to the Evros river. According to the respondent, the place looked like an army station, with several people wearing green army uniforms, army trucks around and one big cell filled with undocumented people.

Five Greek army officers wearing army uniforms, green trousers, a green t-shirt, and army boots, helped the officers in civilian clothing to take the respondent and the undocumented people off the blue bus. The army officers weren't wearing any face coverings. They insulted the people from the transit group in Greek and confiscated their belongings including money, watch, rings, belts etc. They did not return the items to the people.

The respondent and others were put in a cell for an hour. After this, the Greek army officers counted them and took them out of the cell. They then separated them into groups of ten people and put them into a big green army truck. There were about 60 people in the truck, including families with women, children and babies. The majority of these people were from Syria, Morocco, Afghanistan, Iraq and Algeria. All of them were standing as there were no seats. It was crowded with little space to breathe.

*"It was really full, and we couldn't breathe"*

They were driven for 20 minutes until they reached the river, with three army officers in the truck and a big white car with about 10 other army officers, following the truck. All army officers were wearing a green army uniform.

They reached the river once it was dark, at 8:30pm on October 13th. They found one grey and blue dinghy. They were divided into small groups of 6 to 10 people to cross the river. In the respondent's dinghy, there were six people, including himself, a Syrian, three Moroccans and an Algerian. None of them were minors. The dinghies were driven by two people – one of the army officers who was in the white car behind the truck, and another man described by the respondent as middle eastern. The two men spoke to each other in English.

The respondent said that he saw six women in the last dinghies, and four of them had babies with them.

The **place** where they crossed the river was close to the Turkish town, Serem.

Once he reached the river, the respondent and the rest of the transit group were met by the Turkish army, who counted them and took them to an army camp, where they gave them food, water and released them.

The respondent was never asked to sign any papers during this journey, and never asked for asylum.

12/10/2020

## “I WAS IN IMMENSE PAIN. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH.”

**Date and time:** October 12, 2020 23:00

**Location:** Didymoteicho/Uzunköprü

**Coordinates:** 41.355401870951, 26.579424098308

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 15 person(s), age: unknown , from: Pakistan

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 uniformed officers, 4 "masked men", all Greek; white van

**Taken to a police station?:** unknown

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

This testimony describes a pushback from Greece to Turkey, which took place on 13 October around 11pm, at the Evros River along the Greek-Turkish border. This pushback impacted 15 young men, including the respondent who is 36 and originally from Pakistan. There were no minors or women involved.

The respondent had been working in Thessaloniki for about 4 months, arriving there in June 2020. However, the respondent was working in Kavala at the time of apprehension by the police. He was taken from a bus stop in Kavala. The police took his phone and his money – 700 euros in total, before putting him in a car to take him to the Kavala police station. There were four uniformed policemen, all of whom spoke in Greek. The policemen kept asking him questions, but the respondent did not understand Greek and kept saying “*I don't know. I don't know*”.

He was held in the police station in Kavala for two days. He was deprived of food and abused by police officers. He was constantly being told to look up and then punched in the face. They hit him in the head, back and legs, and kicked him while forcing him to undress. The police officers

asked if the respondent had a mobile phone, but he lied and said no. When they searched him, they found his phone and hit him even more afterwards. The police officers continued to communicate to him in Greek and the respondent did not understand what they were saying.

*"I was so tired and helpless" he stated.*

Then, at night, three to four Greek officers, all wearing balaclavas, took the respondent and the others out of the police station, and kept telling them to look down. *"I couldn't look up, they would hit me with a baton if we looked up"* the respondent explained. They subsequently kicked him in the back and put him in the back of a white van. The journey was long, about three hours in total.

When they arrived, they were ordered to leave and the respondent realised it was the Evros river. The masked Greek policemen took the respondent out of the car upon arrival at the river and hit him again. They continued to speak in Greek to him and the others. None of them understood what they were saying, but the police officers kept motioning for them to leave and go back to Turkey. He was then put in a small, plastic boat to cross the river to Turkey along with 15 other men. There were two men who paddled the boat with oars, and the journey across the river took 10-15 minutes.

When they arrived on the Turkish shore, they were met by Turkish military who told them to go back to Greece. The respondent was unable to make out their uniforms as it was dark. The men did not go back to Greece, instead they snuck out another way by going further down the shore. The respondent was able to get a taxi and go to Istanbul.

When asked if the respondent had any injuries, he replied they had faded. *"When we were in the river, I was in pain from my beatings. I didn't understand what was going on. I was going crazy"* he continued to explain, *"I don't know when I will leave to try to go to Greece again, it has been five years since I left Pakistan. When I came back to Istanbul, I was in immense pain and had a temperature. I couldn't believe what I was going through"*.

**10/10/2020**

## **"THEY'VE DESTROYED ME, THEY'VE DESTROYED US."**

**Date and time:** October 10, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Soufli/Meriç

**Coordinates:** 41.1943451, 26.2992566

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

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

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 12 Greek police officers, five in black with balaclavas, four of them with some symbol, two 4x4 white land rovers. 4-5 German cars, 2 Syrian aids of the police

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent and eight others had crossed the border and spent seven days walking in Greece, passing and visiting two villages first and then walked up a mountain and continued to walk from there. In total, they walked about 30km.

On the seventh day, at night, the respondent and the eight others arrived in Komotini, aiming to get to Thessaloniki. Just outside Komotini, they came across two cars that subsequently surrounded them. The cars were described as 4x4 white Land Rovers. They carried four men, dressed in black uniforms that had a symbol on the uniform. The respondent was not sure specifically what the symbol was as they were told to keep their eyes down.

They stepped out of the cars and questioned where they were from. *"When they figure out you're Moroccan or Algerian they will hit you more"* stated the respondent. They hit the respondent, who is Moroccan, twice on the arms, once on the elbow. He yelled and screamed in pain but the men told him not to shout. He was then arrested and handcuffed and put into a white van, similar to a Ford, together with the eight others. There were no seats in the van.

The Greek men started to bombard them with questions. *"Where are you from?"*, *"How did you get here?"* they proclaimed. The group was then brought to a police station, where they were questioned again. Those that told the police that they were Moroccan or Algerian were beaten more than the others. All of them were told to take their clothes off, asked again where they were from and then put in a cell where many other people were already detained. There were only two toilets and it was very crowded so they all had to stand. They were standing from 5am to 9pm.

At the detention site in the cell, there was a small window and when looking outside, the respondent saw four to five German cars. There was a 'D' on the license plate, which represents Germany.

Then, at around 9pm, they all had their clothes returned, but not their other personal belongings. Their shoes were returned but the police had removed the laces from the shoes. A man who was wearing all black and had a balaclava on told them to leave the cell. When they left the station, the same van that had brought them was waiting for them. Several policemen were hitting them on their legs as they got into the van. The respondent was hit twice on the face by hands and twice on the legs and back with sticks. The van then took them to the Evros river while at least some of the other people were taken there with other vehicles.

*"They treated us nicely at the river so the Turkish police didn't hear them. We started to tell each other to not tell them [the police] you are Moroccan or Algerian. One of the men forgot and said he was Moroccan and he was hit"*, the respondent explained.

The police officers present at the river divided the men into two groups. Two Syrians were working with the Greek police, wearing civilian clothes and balaclavas. The respondent heard these two Syrians talking to a Syrian family in Arabic. Subsequently, these Syrians put 12 people at a time into a small boat in the river and took them across to Turkey.

They arrived in Turkey cold and tired. The respondent and the 11 other people stayed hiding in the forest on the Turkish side of the Evros river, waiting for the respondents' friends to be pushed back as well. They were close to a Turkish police station. Eventually the others left, but the respondent waited for his friends. As the rest of the group left, they were caught by the Turkish military. The soldiers asked them where the rest of the group was and they pointed out their hiding place. The Turkish military told the group *"you will not go to Istanbul, we will send you back to Greece"*.

The soldiers made them walk to another point of the Evros river and told them to cross it – without a boat. The respondent and his friends told the Turkish soldiers that they could not cross there, but the soldiers said *"do not worry, the water is not deep here, you can cross"*. They were forced to cross back to Greece swimming and waited at the edge of the river till morning, and then crossed back to the Turkish side when there was no military or police there.

*"Why do they treat us with racism and discrimination when they find out we are Moroccan or Algerian and not other nationalities? They've destroyed me, they've destroyed us. Why do they treat us like this?"* the respondent stated.

06/10/2020

## "THEY ALSO BURNT THEIR BAGS, THEIR PHONES, MONEY, EVERYTHING"

**Date and time:** October 6, 2020 05:00

**Location:** Soufli, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.247694, 26.320374

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 12 person(s), age: 26 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 5-7 Greek police officers, 2 (supposed) Greek military officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a 26-year-old man from Afghanistan. On Sunday 4th October 2020 at 8pm, he and 20 other males (including one minor of 17) from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan were crossing the Evros river close to the town of Serem, north-western Turkey. After a night's rest on the Greek side of the border, they started walking further into Greece the next morning.

At 4am on the 6th October, the group were walking beside a road close to a village called "Mikro Derio", when they were apprehended by 5-7 Greek police officers. Several men fled when the police officers ordered them to stop while firing into the air. At no time people were targeted, the shots were fired solely for the purpose of intimidation. The respondent, however, was prevented from escaping by tree branches which cut into his leg. 11 others from his group were apprehended by the officers.

The police officers then started beating and kicking the respondent's group with batons while using derogatory language towards them. Afterwards, they checked their bags and pockets, collected all personal belongings and burnt them.

*"they collected everything on the same spot, they put fuel on it and they burnt them"*

The respondent and the other members of his group were therefore left without shoes, bags, mobiles, just with one T-shirt and the one pair of trousers they were wearing.

After that, they were loaded onto a blue bus which brought them back to the border close to Soufli. They were accompanied by the same police officers in separate police cars. The duration of the drive to the border could not exactly be remembered by the respondent as he was suffering from the injury he had sustained from the branch. However, he was able to indicate on a map where the push-back took place.

*"he can't realize [the duration] that because of the pain he had"*

When they reached the river, the police officers brought the respondent's group from the road down to the river, where they were handed over to two people who, according to the respondent, were wearing military clothes, however the respondent could not see any flags on their uniforms. Those two "military officers" were also Greek.

They had to get on a boat that was then, after the police had checked the area for Turkish border guards, driven by the two "military officers" to the other side of the river. At no point did the respondent ask for asylum.

Upon reaching the Turkish side, the group borrowed a mobile phone from a shepherd to call their smuggler who provided them with a location where they could pick up new shoes and some food.

**04/10/2020**

## **"LIKE ANIMALS: ALL, TOGETHER, IN A BIG CAR, AND THEY DROVE TO THE BORDER"**

**Date and time:** October 4, 2020 18:00

**Location:** 7 km from Edirne, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.684833, 26.438556

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 52 person(s), age: mixed ages, including minors , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Libya

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings, denial of food and water, punching in the face

**Police involved:** approx. 20 Greek police officers, 7 motorcycles, 2 police cars, 1 white Mercedes van, 1 blue police truck

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, personal information taken, papers signed, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On October 3th, 2020, the respondent was in his house in Thessaloniki, when, at around 12:00 in the morning, a unit of more than 14 police officers arrived in his street, with 7 motorcycles and 2 cars. They entered his house forcing the door open and started questioning him based on allegations of a stolen possession.

The respondent, a 27 years old Algerian, had a first “khartia” (police note, a document regularizing a personal stay for a limited period of time) issued in March 2019 and was allegedly in possession of an “Ausweis” (asylum applicants identity document).

Upon being questioned by the police, he denied the allegations and claimed his right to call for his lawyer, at which he was told he could have made the call from the “tmima” (Greek for “department”, here used for police department). To this, the respondent consented and was then conducted to the a police station in Kalamaria, a few blocks from the waterfront, where he was eventually kept for about six hours, from 13:00 to 19:00, and reportedly denied food and water, despite asking for it.

At the police station, the respondent was reportedly treated violently, and some of his belongings were stolen, including his phone and his money. All through this time, the respondent repeatedly asked to call his lawyer, always receiving a denial as an answer.

Afterwards, the respondent was then moved to another police station that he recalls as being a small building, with white and blue external walls and many cars parked in the front, and an upper floor where he was kept for the entire night, up until the morning. To his understanding, this police station, to which he referred as “Allodapon” (literally “of foreigners”, as in “police department for foreigners”) is located further away on the way from Kalamaria to the General Police Headquarters, commonly referred to as “Megaro” (“palace”). From these descriptions it is possible to assume that the police station where the respondent was brought to and kept for the night is the Border Police Station “Mygdonias”, in the municipality of Liti, north of Thessaloniki.

While in this second police station, the respondent was made to sign a paper and to give his fingerprints, before being issued another “khartia”. Once again, he was denied food and water, and to call for his lawyer. In the police station, the respondent recalls meeting other people held in there, from many different nationalities, including Libyans, Palestinian, Syrians, Iraqis and Pakistanis.

In the morning of the following day, 4th of October, the respondent approached one of the policemen and once again asked to make a call to his lawyer, offering 5 euros that he managed to keep on himself after he was stripped of his belongings on the day before. Reportedly, the officer denied his request, took his last money and tore it in pieces. Later on, at around 8:00 or 9:00, all the people were brought downstairs and made to enter a large vehicle, a white Mercedes or Volkswagen van. All people were repeatedly hit, and the respondent was punched in the face by a police officer upon entering the vehicle.

*"I told them 'Where are we going, in the camp? Or where?' and they told me 'You are going to Istanbul'"* said the respondent.

Afterwards, the van drove to a location that the respondent could not identify, especially since from the inside of the vehicle he did not have enough of a visual. In this location, all the people were made to descend the vehicle and enter into a second one. Reportedly, the second vehicle was large enough to hold approximately 50 people inside, and blue in colour with a writing of "Astynomia" (Greek word for police) on the outside. Upon descending, the respondent was able to have a view of the inside of the place, and he claimed it looked "like a camp".

According to the respondent, once every person was made to enter the blue truck, together with other people that were kept in the unidentified location, they were quickly driven to the border with Turkey, arriving at around 18:00. In total, they were a group of 52 or 53 people of different nationalities, including 4 Iraqi women and one 11-year-old Iraqi child.

Upon arriving, all the people were made to walk in line towards the Evros river. Once reached the selected location, the policemen made the group split into smaller groups based on their nationality, beating them with some unidentified item.

*"They started asking 'Where are you from? Where are you from? Where are you from?' and they put the people from Syria and Palestine there, others and Algerians there, some other there",* said the respondent, *"I told them I'm from Algeria. He hit me a lot, and told me 'Just wait here'. And he got all Algerian people, and he put them there with Moroccan people together. They caught Palestinian, and Syrian, and Iraqi, and they put them all together".*

After the selection, the policemen coordinated with two Syrians and two Pakistanis whose task was to drive a small, black boat to and from the Turkish side of the river, multiple times, driving around 10 people across at each trip. According to the respondent, in case the Turkish army force is present and has knowledge of the event, the role of these four "collaborators" is also to go under the retaliation of the action in place of the Greek police officers.

Finally, when most of the people were already on the Turkish side of the river, the respondent recalls hearing screams coming from across the river, where the 4 women were kept as the last group to be driven across the river.

Once in Turkey, the respondent started walking towards the interior with some of the group he was pushed back with, and eventually reached the town of Edirne after around a 7 km walk. The location of the pushback, according to the respondent, is close to the tri-border area between Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria.

30/09/2020

## “YOU CAN’T IMAGINE HOW SOMEONE IS SLEEPING AND THEN SOMEONE TOOK ME BY FORCE FROM THIS PLACE”

**Date and time:** September 30, 2020 07:00

**Location:** Evros border

**Coordinates:** 41.323474855081, 26.501087458021

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: 27 , from: Afghanistan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 9 plain clothed police officers, unknown number of officers in black clothes and balaclavas, 1 alleged frontex officer from Germany (German), 2 policemen by the river

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 27-year-old man from Tunisia, walked from Turkey to Thessaloniki for 25 days. He then stayed in the camp in Diavata, a village on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, for 10 days. On the 30th of September 2020, at 7 am, the respondent was sleeping when the police took him and between 30 to 40 other POM from Diavata to the Police Headquarters (“Megalo”) in Thessaloniki. The police were plain clothed and spoke Greek. They arrived in a bus (“a lot of people inside”), together with three white vans that lacked signs or writing that would identify them as police. The respondent was without shoes and only dressed in a t-shirt and shorts when he was violently put in one of the vans by the police.

“They didn’t explain. He said they shocked me...They pushed us inside the vans and they kicked us...You can’t imagine how someone is sleeping and then someone took me by force from this place.”

People-on-the-move that refused to enter the vans were beaten by the police, recalled the respondent. These people were from Syria, Afghanistan, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Besides, he reportedly witnessed police “throw away” the papers of one person. When one person told the police that he has police papers, he was told to “shut up.” This corresponds to reports collected by BVMN in which the police destroyed legal documents of people on the move.

The respondent was not informed which police station he was brought to by the police. He knew that it was still in the centre and that a bridge was close by. Eventually, he could identify the Police Headquarter Megalo in photographs. At the Megalo Headquarter, the respondent's clothes were checked and his body searched. Then, he was put in a cell along with the people from Diavata where he stayed from 9 am to 4 pm. The respondent was not informed about why he was taken to the police station by the police nor was he presented with a translator. He did not receive any food and water and was forced to drink water from the toilet. He could not recall the exact number of people he shared a cell with as it was very crowded.

The respondent's claim for asylum was ignored by the authorities in Megalo.

From Megalo, the respondent was taken to "another big police station" in the same white vans, with the same people from Diavata Camp. The respondent does not know the exact location of the police station, however, he stated that the journey lasted for approximately 5 minutes.

Together with the respondents description of the station, this suggests that he was brought to the Police Department Republic Square in Thessaloniki.

At the police station, the authorities carried out the same procedure: the people had to undress and their bodies were searched. This time, the police took their bags, phones, and money. The personal belongings were not returned.

Our respondent was also not given food or water at the second police station. Instead, he and the other people-on-the-move were threatened with violence: "if we see someone like to stand up and look to our face, we will beat him," officers inside the station said to the detainees. The respondent witnessed one person being beaten up badly when he asked for water and food. After 20 minutes at the police station, the respondent was put in a cell on a blue bus without windows along with the other people from Diavata. The description of the bus corresponds to the riot vans used by the police. They drove for approximately 3 hours until they reached Lasmos in eastern Greece.

Here, the people were zip-tied and divided into groups of 14 people by 9 Greek police officers in civil clothes. Then, the groups were transported in a car one after another to an "army station."

At the army station, the respondent recalls that "the place was full of people," including many minors. He remembers that it was especially difficult for them as they were "too young."

He could not determine how many in total. There, the police wore black clothes and balaclavas and the respondent could hear them speak different languages. He referred to some authorities as "Frontex officers" and one man said that he is German and from Frontex,

however that was not confirmed by any flags or logos as he describes them as wearing plain black clothing and balaclavas.

The respondent witnessed two racist attacks towards a man from Afghanistan and a man from Libya by two men that said they were German and Greek. The German officer told the Afghan man, "I was torturing your people in your country and I find you again here in the European area" as the respondent recollected, afterwards the officer started beating the man. Another attack occurred when the respondent heard a Greek officer saying "no one will come back here, because it's my country" and eventually started beating a man from Libya.

At night, the respondent was loaded onto a green military truck, "it is a mercedes truck and they were hiding in it like 100 people." They were driving for around half an hour when the truck stopped "in a secret place" close to the border. Our respondent believes that they didn't stop right by the river to evade Turkish soldiers. Then, in groups of 15, the people walked to the river for approximately 20 minutes. At the river, before the people were loaded into a dinghy, they were beaten with tree branches and told "no one will come back after this torture" by the police.

They were put onto a dinghy in groups of around ten people. The respondent asserts that two men from Afghanistan manoeuvred the dinghy, one was driving, the other one was guiding. The respondent recalled that he saw these two Afghan men waiting with another two policemen in a white car when his group reached the river. Numerous other testimonies collected by the BVMN have reported the involvement of Afghan and Pakistani drivers at the Greek-Turkish border. These similar procedures suggest that this outsourcing has become **an unofficial policy at the Greek land border.**

On the dinghy, the respondent described hearing fired shots from kalashnikovs used by the Turkish army. "*Shooting to another people in the other side*" as he called to mind. Then, the respondent spotted an army truck on the Turkish side, he and his group ran away when they saw the truck approaching them once they reached Turkish land. In Turkey, the respondent and his group arrived without shoes, clothes, phones and money. He cannot remember which village they reached first. Eventually, the respondent found broken shoes in the trash and managed to fix them. With the help of Turkish citizens, he reached Istanbul within 3 days of traveling for a journey that would otherwise take 2 hours. At the end of the testimony, the respondent stated:

*"I am afraid to stay here because it is not a safe place. I'm afraid to have the same experience of me, the last time, so it is not a safe experience for me now like I feel afraid all the time....I prefer to go to Athens, to find a work to complete my work because I don't have any money to complete my way to another safe country maybe, not like here."*

The location of the pushback is very roughly estimated as the respondent was not able to remember specific locations at the border.

**26/09/2020**

## **“YES, THIS BLUE BAND WITH THE EU FLAG!”**

**Date and time:** September 26, 2020 23:00

**Location:** Near Orestiada

**Coordinates:** 41.513918990944, 26.575468297841

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 55 person(s), age: 10 months to 60 years , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, DR Congo

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Six “masked men” without and five with assault rifles, one Frontex officer (nationality unclear), min. 5 officers in Greek uniform and 6 people in camouflage uniform with balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

On September 10, at around 8pm, the respondent crossed the border to Greece together with three other men close from **Marasia**. They kept walking for 17 days.

The respondent describes how all night long in every night, patrol cars were driving around. On the seventh day, the respondent spotted police on top of a mountain close from the village of **Roussa** who appeared to be searching the area with binoculars and spotlights.

In Roussa, the group encountered an old Greek man. They begged him not to call the police, but he did not respond so they started running away, uphill. Shortly after, they saw five police cars searching the valley.

In **Esochi**, they met three other men on the move, two Algerians and one Tunisian and decided to continue together. In **Xanthi**, the Tunisian man was not able to continue anymore and decided to try his luck at the bus stop.

The respondent and the other five proceeded by foot, following **highway 2**. Suddenly they witnessed another group of three being apprehended by police who had been hiding under a bridge. The officers unleashed their dogs to stop and arrest the three strangers.

While waiting for the situation to calm down, the respondent and his group met four Pakistani men. They exchanged water and cigarettes with each other. After a while, the Pakistanis tried their luck first and successfully passed by the bridge without police apprehending them. Shortly after, the respondent and his group continued as well.

In **Kavala**, they met an old Greek man who gave them coffee and cigarettes and told them to wait. They were scared and were thinking of running away while he was gone but then he returned with a bag full of food that he had gotten from his workplace.

In another village the next day, they found another man and his son and asked them for water. The old man wanted to give it to them, but the son called the police instead. The whole group of six tried to run away, but one of the Algerians was caught by police and the respondent believes the second Algerian was able to run away but is not sure as they lost him. The respondent was now left with the same three people he had initially crossed the border with.

Close from **Drama**, they were sleeping in a forest when they were suddenly woken up by six "masked men" (dressed in black, wearing balaclavas) and one man in a blue uniform. One of the masked men held a gun against the respondents head and asked where they were from, but nobody was beaten. The seven men took the bags, phones and wallets from the group and told them to get into a grey Ford transit. The respondent described that some of them were not speaking Greek but English with each other. When asked for specifics, the respondent explained that the man in the blue uniform appeared not to speak Greek. When asked for more details regarding the uniform, the respondent explained it was bright blue and had "police" written on it (in English). When asked if it carried any flags, the respondent said yes, the flag of the European Union. When shown a picture of the light blue Frontex armbands, the respondent immediately said "yes, *this blue band with the EU flag*". Unfortunately, the respondent was not able to clearly identify a specific uniform when shown several examples.

The six masked men and the apparent Frontex officer made the whole group board the car. Two of the masked men drove the car, the others stayed behind. After around four hours, they arrived at a detention site which the respondent is sure was located in **Alexandropouli**. The respondent describes it as looking like a police station. Outside, there were several officers in Greek police uniforms. Inside were six or seven people in green camouflage uniform. All of them were wearing balaclavas.

The respondent and his group were taken into a room which they estimated to be four by four meters and was already filled with 50 to 60 people. There were several families among them, one with a very small baby of around 10 or 11 months. There were people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Syria, Algeria and DR Congo. They were held there for around 8 hours without water, food or access to a toilet.

Then, around 7pm, the men in camouflage uniform and with black balaclavas told them all to leave the room and get into a lorry (green camouflage as well). They were holding batons and used them to hit people while they were getting on the lorry. One of these soldiers spoke Turkish, the others Greek.

The lorry drove for around three hours and stopped close to Evros river. Five soldiers with balaclavas and batons (possibly the same as at the detention site) were present as well as five men dressed in black with balaclavas and assault rifles.

The whole group had to wait in silence for one hour before the boat was ready. Then, 10 at once, they were taken to the Turkish side of the river.

There they walked until they found a taxi that took them back to Istanbul. The respondent was not able to say where exactly the pushback occurred, the location is thus roughly estimated based on the other details.

**21/09/2020**

## “DEPORTATION OF BENEFICIARY OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN GERMANY”

**Date and time:** September 21, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Evros River, Border between Greece and Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.6771297, 26.5557145

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 70 person(s), age: Unknown , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek police, several white unmarked vans, officers in brown/camouflage uniforms, officers dressed in black with balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a Syrian national who arrived on European shores in 2015 and was granted asylum in Germany. In 2017 he traveled to Greece to welcome his children who were in the process of crossing from Turkey, due to delays to family reunification in Germany. Unknowing of the consequences, he approached the Greek-Turkish border where he was captured and , despite being in possession of a valid German residence permit, he was illegally pushed back to Turkey. The respondent re-entered Greece through one of the hotspot islands where he was

bound by geographic restrictions and could not travel for 6 months. He was eventually allowed to travel to Athens where he could access the German embassy. In April 2019, he relocated to Thessaloniki where he has been waiting for the protection he was granted to be recognized and be given a visa to enter Germany. While waiting for the visa/to be recognized, he was homeless.

On the Sunday of September 20, the respondent was approached by two policemen in Aristotelous Square of Thessaloniki around midday. He was asked for identification which he produced, though he was in possession of an expired document "khartia", document issued by the police to regularize an asylum seeker's stay until s/he has access to register her/his asylum application. He was taken to the closest police station to the Square, he stated that on foot it took two minutes. At the police station, his backpack and his belongings were removed: his telephone, his Syrian national ID, as well as other documents in his possession, and 40 euros in cash.

He was held in the police station for about five hours and then he was transferred to a different police station in Thessaloniki. He recognized the police station, as he had been there before and had received a "khartia" from there in the past (the validity of the "khartia" varies between 30 days and 6 months, depending on the nationality of the asylum seeker; recently the practice has changed and the validity is generally 30 days indifferent to the nationality of the applicant).

At the second police station, he was fingerprinted, his photo was taken, and he was asked to sign documents in Greek without being provided interpretation. He was detained overnight until the next day. On Monday, September 21st, the respondent was put in a white van with 10 other persons, and was driven to the border. He described the drive taking about 4 hours and that there were two vans with people destined for the border. He describes the van as being small and having tinted or covered windows. In the van with him, a Syrian Kurd told him how they have arrested him while his child was left in a camp. He could not explain the policemen the situation without interpretation and kept on repeating "baby, baby". The respondent has lost contact with the individual and was not given more information than presented.

The vans dropped the persons at a location where between 60-70 persons were kept. The respondent identified three Somali women and one older Syrian woman. The nationalities varied, he stated that "*they don't care about your nationality*", seemingly implying that everyone will be pushed back despite protection needs and vulnerabilities.

The officers present during the operation were wearing camouflage uniform, "from yellow to brown", while other officers were wearing black uniform and balaclava to cover their faces. The respondent states that the officers performing the pushback at the river, wore black clothes and had covered faces. He describes that all were armed with guns and batons.

From the detention place, the respondent as part of a 60 to 70 persons group were driven to the border in a truck. He reports that the officers were violent at times to encourage people to stay quiet or to move in an organized manner from the truck to the boats. He reports that the boat was hidden in the trees on the river bank and taken out to be used to transport people over the river. He also reports that accompanying the policemen he could hear two men who spoke a Kurdish dialect. They "pushed" the boat and assisted the policemen in the operation. The operation took place at night in order to avoid spotting from Turkish border guards, according to the respondent.

Once they were crossed over, the respondent reports that he ran away to avoid interception from the Turkish police, as he is Syrian and could risk deportation to Syria (he is not in the

possession of the “kimlik” – Turkish ID – which could provide him protection from deportation). The respondent is currently in Istanbul.

18/09/2020

## “FORCED TO WALK INTO THE RIVER AT THE GREEK/ TURKISH BORDER BY TURKISH SOLDIERS AFTER BEING PUSHED BACK FROM GREECE”

**Date and time:** September 18, 2020 02:00

**Location:** Maritsa River 4 hours NW walking distance from Ipsala, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.943603263318, 26.356455772012

**Pushback from:** Greece, Turkey

**Pushback to:** Greece, Turkey

**Demographics:** 80-90 person(s), age: 8-38 years old, unknown years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, water immersion, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 1 police officer in a black uniform, Greek police, 5 male officers in black trousers, army-coloured t-shirts and black face masks, 1 dinghy; 20-25 "Turkish army soldiers", white unmarked vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On Thursday, September 17th 2020, at around two o'clock in the afternoon, the respondent, a 36 year old man from Pakistan was walking alone at a bus station in the city of Xanthi, in order to buy a bus ticket to Thessaloniki, when he was approached by a police officer in a black uniform. The officer was telling him from afar to come towards him. The respondent, who was very hungry and in pain because he had been walking for five days from the border to Xanthi, walked towards the officer, who was then walking him into the police station that was in front of the bus station. The respondent told the police inside the station about his pain and hunger as well as his wish to apply for Asylum in Greece, but the officers did not ask him any further questions. The officer in the black uniform searched his personal belongings and took away the respondents two phones, powerbank, extra clothes, 2000 Turkish Lira, 70 Euros and the bag he was carrying it in. Afterwards they brought him into an extra room, where he had to undress and undergo a body search. Three different police men in brown trousers and brown t-shirts were conducting the body search, after which the respondent was allowed to put almost all of his clothes back on, except a jacket which he was wearing at that time due to the colder weather at the border areas, which the police just threw into a bin.

Afterwards he was brought into the cell at the station, and even though he explained to the officers again that he was hungry and has not eaten for the last two days, they did not offer him any water or food. In the cell were already ten to fifteen people when the respondent was brought in, and by the time he left the cell at night, he estimated that around 30 to 35 people were detained with him. He described the people in the cell coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, and that also families with children were held in the same cell with the men. He described a Pakistan man with his two children being at the age of eight to ten years old and five arabic women with their families. In the cell, the detainees had to sleep on the floor because there was no space, and the toilets were accessible but very dirty.

Around ten o'clock in the evening, it was already dark outside, the respondent was brought into a van with 20 to 25 other people from the cell. The van was plain white and had no windows and he estimated that they were driving for about one and a half hours before they reached a building, which the respondent described as a "border police station", because of the cells inside and the fact that it was very close to the border.

At the "border police station", he was in the cell with 80 to 90 people. He described that seven or eight male officers in brown trousers and shirts who were speaking greek to each other, were conducting body searches again, but this time they were taking away the shoes from the detainees. before they started to beat the detainees, including him, by slapping with their hands, kicking with their feet and beating them with metal sticks. Afterwards they were brought into a cell, where they had no food or water and "a lot of dirty toilets".

After one to one and a half hours, the respondent estimated it must have been around two o'clock at night, all of the detainees were brought to a river by four vans. The vans looked the same as the one that brought the respondent from the police station in Xanthi to the "border police station", white with no writing on it, metal in front of the windows and a small hole for air circulation. He estimated the drive was about 30 to 35 minutes long. He also stated that the families were put in the van with the men, and that he himself was put in one van with 25 or 27 other detainees. The respondent stated that 3 police officers were in the van, one driving and two in the back of the van with him, which he recognized by their voices because they were the only ones allowed to speak in the van.

When he was pushed out of the van, it was very dark outside and he was only able to see once what the officers at the river were wearing; black trousers, army-colored t-shirts, and black face masks that only showed the eyes. He described them as being different from the officers from the "border police station". He stated that there were about five officers, but that he is not sure, because he was ordered by them to keep his head down all times and threatened with beatings if he did otherwise.

He stated that the 80 to 90 people from the "border police station" were all at the river, including the families and children. Before the people were brought to the turkish side of the river with a dinghy, the respondent described that the officers were "beating them brutally" with big wooden sticks and that there was "a lot of crying, but they (officers) don't care". He was not able to recall if the families were beaten with the wooden sticks as well.

The dinghy, which the respondent described as a plastic and air boat, was driven by two men from Afghanistan, while two Pakistan men on the turkish side pulled the people out of the boat and one men from Afghanistan told the people on the greek side of the river to get into the boat. He described them as young men being between 20 and 38 years old. The respondent

stated that 14 or 15 people were put in the dinghy and that the two Afghan men drove it back and forth multiple times.

When the respondent reached the Turkish side, he was walking for about two or three minutes with other men to a road which he described as "*not a real road, but for driving*", on which they sat down to rest because they were exhausted. Immediately, five vehicles arrived, which the respondent described as being of an army color with nothing written on them. 20 to 25 men, which the respondent described as "army soldiers" having plates on their shoulders and arms, were coming out of the vehicles, telling the people to go back to Greece, not to come back to Turkey and that they had to go inside the river again to cross it. He stated that the families, children and "small small guys" were taken into the back of two of the vehicles and drove off, while the remaining people, approximately 40 men were forced to go into the river. He stated that anybody who spoke up and did not walk back was slapped with the hand, including himself, or kicked with the feet, and that the "army soldiers" were throwing stones at him and the other men while they were walking into the river. The respondent stated that he does not know whether the greek officers were still at the river on the other side because it was very dark, but that he did not hear any noise from the other side when he was forced to walk back into the river.

After one and a half hours standing in the river, after the "Turkish army soldiers" were gone, he and the other men went out on the turkish side and ran away in different directions. The respondent then walked for four hours barefeet to a petrol station in Ipsala together with three men from Pakistan and one man from Syria.

16/09/2020

## "PUSHBACK FROM LAGADIKIA CAMP"

**Date and time:** September 16, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Lagadikia, Greece

**Coordinates:** 40.6376256, 23.2428886

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** Approximately 100 person(s), age: 4, 14, 18 and other , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 10 policemen - moment of arrest, 3 policemen in the bus, 7 policemen present at unknow detention place

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a Kurdish-Iraqi national. He arrived in Greece on September 3rd, together with his family composed of his wife and three daughters, 4 years old, 14 years old, and 18 years old. They are currently back in Iraq, after being pushed back from Greece to Turkey, from where they were subsequently deported to Iraq.

The respondent arrived in Thessaloniki through the land border and tried to access the asylum procedure and went to a police station where he expressed his will to apply for asylum. He waited in the police station for about 4 hours before deciding to leave since the police officers were refusing to register his application. He states that his children were exhausted. For the following 4 days they stayed in a hotel in the city after which they left and went to Lagadikia camp, located 40 km far from Thessaloniki.

In the camp they were assisted by camp residents with food and a place to stay, while organizations provided them with other non food items as well as food. They were allowed to stay in a container with one other unregistered family, but since their asylum application was still not submitted the police was notified. On September 16th, police officers arrived in the camp, 10 uniformed officers in total according to the respondent and transferred them to a police station 20-25 minutes drive from the camp. They were told they will be registered and issued the necessary documentation. They were not fingerprinted, nor their information was registered, the respondent reports. Additionally, he states that the policemen purchased food for the people detained from the cash belonging to them. The respondent states that he expressed his wish to apply for asylum with the help of his oldest daughter who spoke English to the officers.

They were detained for 3 or 4 hours when they were picked up from the police station by a group of men in civilian clothing that the respondent describes as "the mafia". He reports that after having an argument with the police officers at the station, the men came and took them in front of the other police officers. The respondent and his family together with other persons who were arrested and detained in the police station, were placed in a dark-blue bus, without inscription on the side, and grated windows. He states there were about 5 families and 5 single men in the bus, and 3 men that he does not identify as police officers. The men spoke Greek.

*They were like mafia. They came there [at the police station] and take us. They look like mafia.*

They were driven for about 6 hours and placed in "an abandoned place". They took away their belongings, their mobile phones and all the money they had in their possession. He reports there were about 7 "commandos", wearing different uniforms, military clothing of dark green color, as well as blue uniforms; some wearing lights on their heads, some wearing weapons. At this "abandoned place" there were about 100 people of different nationalities, the respondent believes that they could have been Afghan, Pakistan, Syrian nationals and ethnic Kurds. All the people were loaded into two vehicles by 4 of the officers. The vehicles are described as closed military buses big enough to fit 50 people inside. They were transported to the river bank.

At the river bank, they were transported in groups across the river. One of the "commandos", as the respondent called them, who wore green clothes and ferried them in the boat spoke Greek and Turkish, as well as a Kurdish dialect. At this stage, all of the officers involved wore balaclavas that covered their faces.

Once they were on the Turkish side of the river, the respondent and his family walked for one hour before encountering people who assisted them. The people said to the family:

*Why you went to Greece? There is no humanity [in Greece]!*

The family eventually returned to Istanbul. A few days later, they were arrested by the Turkish gendarmes and returned to Iraq. They were driven in a bus and released at the Turkish-Iraqi border.

The story has also been published in EFSYN, a Greek online newspaper available [here](#)

15/09/2020

## “WHEN I TALK ABOUT MY STORY IT MAKES ME SO SAD BECAUSE I HAVE TO REMEMBER”

**Date and time:** September 15, 2020 22:00

**Location:** Feres, Greece

**Coordinates:** 40.895113, 26.249899

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 90 person(s), age: 31, from: Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 2 Greek police officers at initial arrest, several more Greek police officers at police stations

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a 31-year-old man from Algeria. On the evening of the 12th September, he was with a male friend, 30 years old and also Algerian, walking besides the sea close to the port of Thessaloniki. Between 12 pm and 1 am on 13th September they were stopped by two O.Π.K.E Greek police officers on a motorbike. The police officers immediately started using physical

violence towards them and afterwards they had to walk to a “secret place”. For the journey the respondent had to put his hands on the shoulders of his friend.

This “secret place” is described by the respondent as a dark place outside, surrounded by trees and close to the **White Tower**. There they found another two men from Algeria and shortly after another two men (unknown nationality) were brought to that same place where there were now 6 people-on-the-move and 12 or 13 police officers wearing police uniforms. There the police continued beating them using batons and kicking them for about 10 minutes. After that they were handcuffed before a police car arrived with which they were taken to a police station in the upper part of the city. It is not clear exactly, which police station they were brought to, but according to the respondent the journey from that place close to the white tower was about 20 minutes long and they drove uphill, which together with the fact that they were brought the next day to Megalo, leads to the assumption, that he was brought to the Sykies police department. When asking for the reason for his arrest, the respondent was told that it is because he didn't have papers.

At this police station, two of his group were released because they had papers, the rest of them were slapped and beaten again with sticks, insulted in Greek and denied food or water. They had to ask for permission to go to the toilet. In the morning of the same day at 7:30 am two more of his group were taken away (their whereabouts are unknown) before the respondent and his friend were transferred to Thessaloniki police headquarters at 8 am with an ordinary police car.

At police headquarters, the police first checked their pockets and clothes which they had to take off. They gave them back their clothes afterwards but kept their phones and bags. They then took fingerprints of the respondent as well as pictures and he also had to sign Greek documents without any translation provided. In total the respondent stayed for 28 hours at police headquarters, and during that time only received one meal and a small bottle of water (0,5l).

On the next day, the 14th September at 12am the police zip-tied the hands of the respondent's group which now consisted of 10 people, 5-6 Syrians, the respondent and his friend from Algeria and another 2-3 people with unknown nationality. His group was then put in the back of a green Mercedes van without windows or seats. With that van they were driving 35 minutes to another police station (the location of this police station is unknown). Once there, their money was taken from them, their bags, which were taken from them back in police headquarters, were handed over by the police to the driver of the Mercedes, who is described as a unknown Greek speaking person in civil clothes, and the respondent's group themselves were transferred to a 'big blue bus', which indicates the use of a police bus.

In that big blue bus, which is divided in 12 small cells in the back, they were waiting for more people until the bus was almost full. In total they were then 30-35 people guarded by civil police (number of police officers in the bus is unknown). With this bus they drove to another police station (not signs of police but uniformed police officers there) close to **Komothini** which was however not really an actual police station but a temporary building made of plastic and metal as described by the respondent. He was put together with 75 people in a room of approximately 8 × 12 metres and had to stay there for 24 hours. There were other rooms similarly crowded at this police station. Due to the bad isolation of the 'building' it got extremely hot during the day and very cold in the night. Again they were refused water or food.

They had access to a toilet, from where they also drank water, yet it was very dirty according to the respondent.

*"The toilet was so dirty and you have to drink water from there"*

The police used violence in this station only against three people because they asked for their money. From this room in the night 25 people were taken away with a white van with no police insignia on it (their whereabouts are unknown).

On the next day, our respondent himself was put into the back of a white van with another 25 people and was taken from there to Feres. This was probably not an official police station in Feres as there were no police signs or logos. His group found another 50 people there including children and women. This station again is described as 'so dirty' by the respondent. Their guards (supposedly police), who were wearing balaclavas, also beat some people there. The same guards confiscated their clothes and shoes and they were left only with a t-shirt and boxers.

In the night they were in a group of 90 people including women and children taken to the Evros river close to Feres in a big truck and there separated into groups of 12 people each. At that point, two people of his group were beaten by the before mentioned men in balaclavas.

*"They were taken off their clothes and they beat them a lot, badly, so badly"*

When they reached the river around 10 pm they had to get on dinghies group by group and finally reached the Turkish side. The dinghies were driven by four people, one from Syria, two from Pakistan and one white man who was only talking English. The fact that the dinghies are not driven by Greek authorities or not even by Greek people has been witnessed already in other reports. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/october-4-2020-1800-7-km-from-edirne/>

On the Turkish side they were helped by the Turkish army and got to Ipsala which was 20km away from the point where they reached the Turkish side.

**12/09/2020**

**““THEY TOLD US WE DON'T HAVE FOOD FOR YOU””**

**Date and time:** September 12, 2020 22:30

**Location:** Greek/Turkish border, near Uzunkopru

**Coordinates:** 41.34183, 26.622821

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 25 person(s), age: unknown, from: Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** police in civilian clothes, Greek police in black uniforms, Greek military, small white Renault van, riot police bus, Greek military vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 24-year-old man from Morocco, and his friend, another Moroccan man, were apprehended at the Diavata camp, on September 11th 2020, after a fight broke between his friend and an Iraqi man in the camp.

The police, dressed in civilian clothing, came to the camp following the fight and apprehended the Moroccan man involved in the fight, and his friend, the respondent, who was not involved in the fight.

The respondent and his friend were handcuffed with regular metal handcuffs and driven in a civilian car to a local police station in Thessaloniki, 30 minutes away from the Diavata camp. It was the first time the respondent heard about the fight. They were detained in a cell for 40 minutes and then taken to another police station with the same civilian car and by the same civilian officers about 40 minutes away.

The second police station didn't have a police signboard. There, the policemen in civilian clothing took the respondent and his friend's phones, fingerprints, pictures and money away – 200 Euros. The respondent and his friend were detained in a cell with 12 other people for 24 hours. During that time, they had access to toilets and showers. The respondent signed a document in greek that he did not understand. He didn't ask for an interpreter. The police officers gave them six euros per day, and someone came in the evening to sell sandwiches.

The respondent claims he saw a woman and her child in an isolated cell.

At the end of their stay in this cell, the police gave them back their clothes and backpacks but not their money.

The respondent, his friend, and about 15 people (all adult men) were then driven for an hour in a windowless small white Renault van to another place near Kavala, in the middle of a forest. They were then put on a big blue bus, in which another four people joined and were driven to a place that looked like an army station according to the respondent, near the Turkish border, three and a half hours away from Kavala. The respondent explained that the place was cold and dirty. He assumed it was an army station because the officers were in black military uniforms and the vans around looked like military vans.

At the alleged army station, men wearing black uniforms took the respondent's shoes, clothes and backpack and threw them away. He was never given his belongings back. His request for food was denied. "They told us we don't have food for you", the respondent said.

He claims there were several families with women and children in the army station. He stayed in there for four hours, until he was driven to a place close to the Turkish border (41.341830, 26.622821). The van they drove in was a special van to drive on uneven roads like in forests. According to the respondent, it looked like an army van. He claims that women and children were in the army van with him. They were accompanied by three officers, wearing black

uniforms and balaclavas. The respondent assumed these men were police officers based on their black uniform.

In groups of 25 people, the three policemen walked them from the van to the river. The respondent and his group, which included women and children and people from Algeria, Syria, Morocco and Pakistan, were put into black and white dinghies allegedly driven by two Afghans, to cross the river to Turkey.

While crossing the river, the respondent claims he was beaten by the officers, with sticks and hands. The officers did not go in the dinghies with them.

As he arrived at the Turkish border, the respondent walked for two hours, to the village of Uzunkopru, where he slept in a squat before getting a train to Istanbul.

10/09/2020

**“YOU ARE MUSLIM [...] AND WE ARE CHRISTIAN, SO WHY ARE YOU COMING TO OUR COUNTRY, WE DON'T NEED YOU HERE BECAUSE YOU ARE MUSLIM”**

**Date and time:** September 10, 2020 10:30

**Location:** Feres, Greece

**Coordinates:** 40.905925, 26.254513

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: 28 , from: Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Somalia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 Greek police officers at initial arrest

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** photos taken

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a 28-year-old man from Algeria. On September 9th at 8 pm, he was with a 21-year-old Algerian male friend and three Pakistani men aged 19 to 30 approximately 10 kilometres away from the Greek-North Macedonian border. According to the respondent, they were **here**.

At this location, they were stopped by 6 Greek police officers, who approached with two cars from both sides of the road, blocking it. Of these officers one was female, five were male. The woman and one man were dressed in civilian clothes, two wore blue police uniforms and the other were dressed in military fatigues and blue police jackets. The cars were Dacias (one

Dacia Laguna and another similar model) with tinted windows, each had no police insignia. However one vehicle had a flashing blue light and the respondent could see radio intercoms inside.

One of the policemen fired several shots into the air to intimidate the group and to prevent them from fleeing sideways towards the nearby tracks or into the forest. He also shouted at them to sit down, which they did. When the police arrived at the respondent's group, one officer kicked him in the back and ordered him to stand up, whereupon he asked him about his nationality. The respondent said he was from Palestine to which the policeman gave a dismissive reply: "You look like a Moroccan." He then started beating him with his baton and kicked him repeatedly. The other members of his group were also beaten with fists and batons.

Additionally one officer insulted a member of the group with reference to his religion:

*"You are Muslim [...] and we are Christian, so why are you coming to our country, we don't need you here because you are Muslim"*

After the assault, their hands were zip-tied and they were divided between the two cars. Our respondent was sitting in a car with two Pakistanis. They were then taken to a police station in a drive that lasted 15 minutes. The duration of the drive, together with the site of apprehension, suggests that they were brought to the **Polykastro police department**.

There the police officers exited the car and left the men locked inside the vehicle for half an hour. The respondent reported that it was too cramped for three people and also very hot because the car was parked in the sun. After the wait, the police officers finally returned and took pictures of the respondent and his group.

He and the two Pakistanis were then brought in the same vehicle to Drama to the Paranesti detention centre. They arrived at 11 pm. In Drama, they were first taken to a caravan, where the police searched their bags, clothes and backpacks. At that time, there was also someone from Morocco in the same caravan, who told them that they were in Drama, as the respondent and his group themselves did not know where they were. This Moroccan person left the caravan only a few minutes later. At that point, the police officers who brought them from Polykastro had left, except for the two officers with army pants who were still guarding them in Drama.

Following the search, police confiscated their valuables, in the case of the respondent 800€ and his smartphone – none of which were returned. They were then forced to strip to only a T-shirt and shorts. The respondent saw plenty of other clothes in the caravan, but when he tried to take some of them he was slapped in the face by one police officer. When he attempted to retrieve his money from the table where they put it, one officer struck him with a baton.

The men had to sleep one night on the floor of the caravan, which was monitored by cameras, without a blanket.

*"it was so cold without any blankets and any beds, they were sleeping on the ground"*

The next evening, at 7 pm, the respondent and were put in the back of a white van, which did not have any police insignia on it, along with nine others from Algeria, Morocco and Iraq. They were locked in the back of the van, which was lined with metal and resembled a cell. They were, however, able to sit as the van had chairs in the back. The driver of the van was a Greek police

officer wearing a Greek police uniform and with him were the same two officers with army pants who had apprehended the respondent near Polykastro.

They were driving for approximately two and a half hours before reaching a place, that the respondent described as following:

*"There is [...] close to this army station, the train tracks, so close to it. There is three cells and there are offices on the opposite side of the cells and there is barboil around the place, that's how it was looking at night."*

As the respondent reported, this army camp is located near Ferres.

The respondent's group was brought inside the camp into a big room, where they found 20-30 other people, including a Somalian family and other women with their children. They were guarded by "huge" men wearing green army uniforms, balaclavas and bulletproof vests. These military personnel told them to strip completely naked and afterwards beat them with batons. The respondent stated:

*"he doesn't care if he hits you in your head or in your face, they are using metal sticks, big metal sticks, [...] my body was blue from this beating"*

The women and children were spared from this beating.

After this episode, they were brought to the Evros river with two army trucks. The respondent was in the back of one truck together with 18-20 people, among them Syrians, Pakistanis, Moroccans, Algerians and two Somalian teenage sisters, one reportedly "looked 14 years old". The two trucks were driven by people in military clothes and were followed by one car.

At the river, there were 6 officers wearing military clothes, one of whom was communicating to the respondent's group in English, and one other man with black clothes and balaclava, who was seemingly communicating to someone else with a headset.

At that place, they had to cross the river in a dinghy, along a rope stretched from one bank to the other. There was only one dinghy, which was driven by two Pakistanis wearing green safety vests. On every crossing, 9-10 people crossed the river, the women and children were the last ones to cross.

In Turkey, the pushed back group encountered the Turkish army, but the respondent himself fled. He continued walking barefoot for two hours until he reached a village. He slept in the mosque for the night, before making his way back to Istanbul the following day.

The location of the pushback was estimated by the respondent to be **here**.

09/09/2020

## “DEATHS DURING PUSHBACK AT THE EVROS BORDER”

**Date and time:** September 9, 2020 11:00

**Location:** Greek-Turkish border, near Edirne

**Coordinates:** 41.635139056979, 26.508846283667

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 120 person(s), age: mixed , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 3 Greek Police Officers (Xanthi), 20 Greek Soldiers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

This testimony documents violence, torture and extensive human rights violations by the Greek authorities, involving women, children and seniors. If the respondent is to be believed, two people were killed during this push back.

The respondent is a 50-year-old man from northern Afghanistan. At 11:00 a.m. on the 9th of September 2020, he boarded a bus in Xanthi, north-eastern Greece, bound for Thessaloniki. After a short drive of ten minutes, the bus pulled over and one Greek police officer “dressed in a blue uniform” entered the vehicle. The officer approached the respondent and asked him to produce his “documents”.

According to the respondent, he was in possession of “police paper” – a temporary residency permit of 30 days which is commonly known as *khartia* in Greece – that was valid. Nevertheless, the officer stated that he “needed to check the document” and requested that the respondent exit the bus. Initially hesitant to leave, the officer reassured him that it was a routine procedure. He was escorted outside where two more Greek police officers were waiting.

A further three men were brought off the bus by the police. They were Syrian and, like the respondent, allegedly possessed *khartia*. The three officers then walked the men “some minutes” – to a point which the respondent claimed was purposefully out of sight – handcuffed them, tore up their documents and loaded the group into the back of a white, windowless van.

Next, the four men were driven to a police station in Xanthi that was “by a motorway.” They were placed in a large cell that contained 26 other people-on-the-move from a wide range of countries; Tunisians, Moroccans, Egyptians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were all present.

*“I am a legal person here”*

How the detainees were treated inside Xanthi Police Station is concerning. Not only was the cell described as “filthy” and “overcrowded”, the officers stripped them of their valuables, clothes and shoes. Indeed, despite confiscating their money – the respondent himself had 130 euros seized – the officers told the detainees that they could only *buy* food and water. “*You guys have taken our money, so how are we supposed to buy stuff for ourselves*”, the respondent recalled asking the police.

Wider reports have flagged up numerous issues inside Greek pre-removal facilities, including unsanitary conditions, an impossibility of seeing visitors and insufficient access to healthcare.

Amplifying this anxiety, the detainees were denied a translator or any information from the officers as to what was happening. The respondent said:

“They [the police] were not talking to them ... they was just hitting them and throwing them into the room.”

*“Maximum it was for 15 to 18 people ... [but] the police [didn't] care ... they just wanted to close them in the van and take them to the border”*

Approximately seven hours later, the respondent stated that the police unlocked the cell door and corralled all of the detainees into the back of a van with metal batons. Although the respondent could not relay an exact description of the vehicle, he stated it was a “small minibus”. Meanwhile, from a separate part of the station, four women and four minors were also loaded into the back of the van – two reportedly were below the age of seven.

*“If the car would take another thirty minutes or one hour, there would be some people who would have got unconscious”*

Without air-conditioning, and with only a few holes in the roof for ventilation, the back of the van was not only pitch black, but soon became intolerably hot once the journey started. Many vomited from heat stroke, while others had to strip due to the high temperature. The group remained in these conditions for between four to five hours.

At 9:00 p.m., the group arrived at what the respondent called a “big army base” where 20 Greek soldiers were stationed. “*They [the soldiers] covered their faces, they were wearing black uniforms and they were not letting anyone look up,*” the respondent recounted. Many were armed.

He continued: “*it's a hidden army base ... they [the Greeks] don't want anyone to know about it or [that] journalists put it in the media.*”

The soldiers led the group into a vast room inside the building, which contained roughly 120 people-on-the-move, and told them to wait. For two and a half hours, during which the

respondent observed multiple “beatings,” the group waited until a bus arrived. This vehicle was described by the respondent as one of “the army’s big green buses.”

Like before, the group was transported in dangerous, dehumanising conditions. Although six Syrian and Palestinian families were present, containing around eight women and 16 minors, there was insufficient seating on the bus and those standing up stifled the air of those below them. This time, two people fainted.

“*They were screaming to the bus drivers and they were not stopping the bus*”

The group was driven one and a half hours to the Greek-Turkish border. They were led by the soldiers into a concealed, wooded area and made to kneel on the ground. Then, in groups of ten, they were forced to crawl to the banks of the Maritsa River. There a black dinghy waited for them.

The dinghy was manned by a Pakistani man. Speaking Pashto, the respondent talked to the driver and found that he had been offered documentation by the Greek authorities in exchange for two months manning the vessels. Whether or not this bargain is honoured remains unclear.

Unusually for the Evros border, the “air pressure boats”, as the respondent called them, were not docked, but floating at a distance from the bank and could only be reached by wading out into the river.

The dinghy itself was small. Indeed, before boarding, one man warned the soldiers that the group could not fit safely inside, however they responded by beating him and wounding his forehead. “*There was too much bleeding*”, the respondent noted. Heedless to their warnings, the police proceeded to load the people inside the dinghy. “*Most of them had big bodies*”, the respondent recounted, “*like ten people wont fit in one boat. The police did not care about that.*”

In the next moments, the dinghy capsized and everyone on board fell into the water.

“*The boat was down, without air, it had holes*”

With many of the group unable to swim, panic ensued. As the respondent said: “*they started screaming, and the police were saying to them don’t scream.*” Under such duress, two men fell unconscious and drowned. This was despite the effort of one member of the group who swam into the water to try and return the others to safety.

After the survivors returned to the riverbank – thanks, in part, to the effort of this one man – a new dinghy was brought downstream. However, not wishing to create another scene that could alert the Turkish soldiers, the Greek soldiers strung a rope between the bank and the dinghy in the river, so that everyone “*could come easily*”.

Once on the Turkish side of the border, the respondent – still without shoes – sought refuge at a petrol station. The first settlement he recalled seeing was Edirne.

06/09/2020

**“I GOT DRUNK FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO TELL THEM, BUT I CAN’T. HOW CAN I TELL THEM THEIR SON IS DEAD!?”**

**Date and time:** September 6, 2020 17:00

**Location:** Alexandroupoli bus station

**Coordinates:** 40.8457193, 25.873962

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 80 person(s), age: 3 years to unknown , from: Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, burned with a cigarette

**Police involved:** 2 officers in Greek police uniform, 2 plainclothes officers, 12 men dressed in black wearing balaclavas, one white car

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 31st of August, 2020, a group of 16 people crossed the border from Meric, Turkey. 12 of them made an onward journey by car, the respondent and three of his friends continued by foot. They walked six days and reached Alexandroupoli.

Their plan was to walk to Thessaloniki but shortly before they reached Alexandroupoli, one of the group injured his ankle. He told the others to leave him there and continue, but they refused and carried him to the bus station in Alexandroupoli to continue by bus. They arrived there at around 05:00 on 5th September 2020.

They were able to purchase the tickets and get on the bus but then, Greek police arrived. The respondents believed that the people at the ticket counter had called the police. The officers came in a white car. Two police officers were wearing blue uniforms with Greek flags and boots. They got out of the car. Two in civilian clothes stayed inside the car.

The uniformed officers got on the bus and asked them where they were from and if they had passports or other IDs. When they said they did not have either, they were handcuffed and taken off the bus and into the car.

They point out that they were not beaten at the bus stop because there were many people present, and they had their handcuffs removed inside the car.

They were driven to Didymoteicho. In the detention site there, the respondent did not want to enter and pleaded with the officers not to be returned to Turkey. One of the officers took him by his feet and dragged him across the floor, another burned him with his cigarette.

There was a Syrian family with small children, Egyptians, Pakistani, Algerians, and many Moroccans. In total around 70 or 80 people, all naked. There was one big room with a very smelly toilet. There were some short, thin mattresses. They said the room did not look like a normal prison or police station but more like a stable. On the toilet there was a small window outside. The respondent says when he looked outside through this window, he saw four cars with German license plates (they described the EU flag and D on the license plate). He cannot describe anything about the rest of the cars because the window was so small he only saw the license plates.

They were kept there for around 24 hours and then 8-10 masked men dressed in black came and told them to get into a van – all 70 or 80 of them into one black vehicle, brutally crammed on top of each other. This vehicle was driving with the lights off, very fast and recklessly, in total for around 20min.

When they arrived at Evros river on the 6th of September, 2020, they had to hide themselves. Several of the masked men were checking the other side of the river with what appeared to be night vision binoculars. Others got one dinghy ready.

They started boarding around 10 people at once onto the boat. The respondent describes:

*“They drove us to the middle of the river – and then they told us to jump. Into the water. Some couldn’t swim and we told them, but they did not care!”*

Only the Syrian family was taken to the other shore, everyone else had to swim.

The two other friends the respondents had crossed the border with disappeared in the river, and he has not heard from them since. At the time of interview, the respondent stated that the mens families keep calling him asking how they are doing. He could not bring himself to tell the real story, as he feared them to be dead.

*“I tried. I got drunk for the first time in my life to have the courage to tell them, but I can’t. How can I tell them their child has died!?”*

On the Turkish side, the group who made it to the bank were suddenly approached by a group of people in civilian clothes he thought to be locals. They were carrying guns and started shooting into the ground around them and asked them for money and phones – they did not have anything left anymore.

**04/09/2020**

## **“THEY PUT ME INTO THE VAN LIKE AN ANIMAL”**

**Date and time:** September 4, 2020 23:00

**Location:** Ipsala, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.943838977088, 26.357152321134

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 110 person(s), age: 20-45 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Turkey (Kurdish)

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 5 greek army soldiers, wearing black masks and helmets, one truck and one riot bus, one van.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On Friday morning, September 4th, 2020, the respondent, a 35-year-old man from Pakistan, was sleeping in a shared tent at the Diavata camp of Thessaloniki. Between 7:00-8:00 am, while other people in the camp were still sleeping, two police officers, one man and one woman dressed in black uniforms, entered the tent and told the respondent and the other man in the tent, that they were from the Greek police and that the two of them should get out of the tent. After they left the tent, the police officers told him that he should not take a bag with him, because they will come back with him later to get it.

Subsequently, the two men were then handcuffed and brought near the management office of the camp, where already six other people were sitting in handcuffs, four men from Morocco, as well as an older Lebanese woman with her adult son. The respondent, who was living in Greece since two years and therefore speaks Greek, reported that the two police officers started to communicate in Greek with each other, confirming that 30 people in total have been taken into custody and thus "the operation" would be complete now, enabling them to leave. They then put the eight people into a white van, which had metal windows on the side and a small hole in the roof for air circulation. Another police officer, also dressed in black clothing, was driving the van. The respondent remembered that the two officers were telling the driver to bring the people to the police station. He estimated that the car ride took about 10 minutes.

Once the respondent and the other seven people reached the police station, the police officer, who was driving the van, escorted all of them into the police station, which was on the first floor of the building, and left. Seven or eight police officers, who were dressed in casual clothes, were at the police station and started to take the personal belongings of the respondent and the other seven people.

The respondent stated that the police took "everything, each and everything", including all of the money in his pockets, which amounted to about 270 euros, and his mobile phone. The officers told him that he was supposed to give everything in his possession to them. They then took his personal belongings and put them into a plastic bag together with a piece of paper, on which they wrote the number 15. The respondent did not receive his belongings back from the police.

Afterward, he was brought into one of the cells at the police station, in which about 35 people have been detained with him. He was able to recognize some of the persons in the cell as also coming from the Diavata camp. In the cell were some of the other men from the van in which he was brought from the camp to the police station, as well as other people he had not seen before. In the cell were only young men, whose age the respondent estimated to be from 25 to 36 years old. The respondent recalled the men being from Pakistan, Turkey (Kurdish), Morocco, Algeria, and Syria. No women were in the cell of the respondent, and the Lebanese woman that was also brought to the police station from the camp was sitting on a chair in front of the cell. In regard to the condition of the cell, the respondent described it as *"hell on earth"*, and that he was not able to sleep in it, because it was a *"very dirty place"* which *"smelled very bad"*.

After about three to four hours, everyone was taken away from the police station. The respondent recalled that first the detainees from the other cell were brought away, and after about 30 minutes he and the people in his cell were taken to a building that he described as the "Kordello prison". Since he was at police stations in Greece before, he recognized the building as being a police station. The transport was conducted in a white van with no windows, that looked similar to the one in which the respondent was transferred from the Diavata camp to the police station, and two officers in black police uniforms were responsible for the transfer. One of them was driving, and the other one was sitting with the detainees in the back of the van. Once the van reached the courtyard of the "prison", the two policemen put the men out of the white van and left the scene.

The respondent estimated being in the courtyard of the "Kordello prison" for about ten to fifteen minutes, and that due to the sunlight, the time of the day must have been around 14:00. When the men left the white van, they were awaited by five men, dressed in casual clothes, who were standing in front of a big blue bus. The detainees were told to come out of the white van and to stand up in one line in front of the bus. Four of the unidentified men started to search the pockets of the detainees and ordered them to remove their clothes to conduct body searches. The respondent did not want to allow a body search, and perceived the conduct as very shameful, but cooperated anyway due to his fear of getting beaten by the police officers. He was also asked by one of the four men whether he had anything in his pocket, which he denied by explaining that the police at the police station had already taken all of his belongings.

Afterward, the detainees were handcuffed and put on the bus. The bus had eight to ten small rooms, which each fitted 4 men inside. One of the five men, who has not been conducting the body searches, was responsible for opening and locking the doors inside the bus. The respondent did not recall seeing any woman in the courtyard or inside the blue bus.

They were driving for about three hours before the bus stopped on a road near the highway. While driving, the respondent looked out of the window of the bus and saw that they were driving in the direction of Xanthi. The detainees were let out of the bus by an unidentified number of officers, who were dressed in casual clothes and armed with guns and metal batons. The men were told to quickly go into a van that was parked next to the blue bus and to sit down there. The respondent had the impression that the officers were *"look[ing] around to see if no one was watching"*. Around 34 men were put inside the white van, that had no windows and only a small hole in the roof for the air to circulate through. The respondent described the seating capacity in the van as being for 20 people and the air in the van as not being enough – *"they put me into the van like an animal"*.

The detainees were in the white van for about one and a half to two hours, before they reached a building that the respondent described as a police station. When they left the van, there was still sunlight outside and five police officers were awaiting them. The detainees were checked once more and ordered to remove their shoes. The shoes of the respondent, as well as the ones of the other detainees were taken away by the police and put into a bin. He was then pushed into a cell, where already around 250 to 280 people were sitting inside. The respondent described most of the men inside the cell being between 20 and 35 years old. He estimated that the men came from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Morocco, Algeria, Syria and that a few people were from Libya and Lebanon. The cell itself was described by the respondent as being "not very big", having no adequate space to sit or sleep, and with "a lot of dirty toilets" of which "water [was] coming out". The respondent did not receive any water or food. Women and families were put into another room, which the respondent described as "a room for the police", instead of a cell.

After three to four hours, five men, described as army soldiers who were wearing black masks covering their face and neck, helmets, as well as long and short guns, opened the cell and told the people to get into a truck. It was already dark outside. Around 70 to 75 people were put into a small truck and then driven off. Afterward came a van in which another 40 to 45 people had to go in. Everyone had to stand in the van because there was no space for everyone to sit down.

After a ten to fifteen minutes drive, the van in which the respondent was standing in stopped at the Meric River along the Greek/Turkish border. The soldiers told everyone to come out and to silently sit down in a line near the river. The people were transported in groups of twelve to fifteen people with a dinghy to the Turkish side. Four men from Afghanistan and Pakistan were cooperating with the soldiers to bring the people to the other side of the river. On the Greek side were the Greek army soldiers, while two of the men were driving the dinghy, and the other two were waiting on the Turkish side of the river to help the people out of the boat.

Once the respondent was brought to the other side of the river, he waited for his friend who was in the line behind him. He was not able to see the Greek side of the river due to the lack of light, but he was able to hear people screaming. After three days of walking without shoes, the respondent reached Istanbul together with a man from Afghanistan.

**02/09/2020**

**"THEY WERE LAUGHING WHILE THEY WERE HITTING US. LAUGHING SO MUCH. NO NORMAL PERSON CAN DO THAT. "**

**Date and time:** September 2, 2020 19:00

**Location:** 30min drive outside Alexandroupoli

**Coordinates:** 41.034521683302, 26.019530847656

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 120 person(s), age: unknown , from: Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, gunshots, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 14 men in black clothes and balaclavas, 2 of them speaking German; 16-17 police officers in blue uniform, all Greek; white van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On 28th August 2020, a group of four Moroccans and two Palestinians crossed the border to Greece with a rubber dinghy on the Evros river in the area of the Turkish town of Meric. On the Greek side, they continued by foot for four days. On the fourth day, early in the morning when it was still dark, they were apprehended by six men in black clothes wearing balaclavas. Four cars were hidden behind some trees, one was big with big wheels stated the respondent.

The masked men started shooting into the ground with guns around the group, yelling “*get on the ground, get on the ground!*”. When the transit group complied, the men approached and started beating them with batons and kicking them on the head, face, torso, legs. Then the men told them to get up and get into one of the cars, it was white. When the transit group entered, each of them was beaten one more time with the baton.

The respondent had previously lived in Germany for four years and is fluent in German (the testimony was taken in German). He recounts that at least two of the masked men who caught them in the forest spoke German with each other. The other four spoke Greek.

One of the masked men asked the group where they were from. When one of the people replied saying he was from Palestine, one of the other masked men (Greek speaker) approached him aggressively and said “*I’m a Jew. I hate Palestine!*”. The masked man then proceeded to kick the Palestinian man in the face.

The respondent did not reveal his German language skills to the masked men out of fear, but he remembers them talking about him and the others, referring to them as rats and terrorists. He describes that they were laughing while hitting them, seeming to take enjoyment from the episode. The respondent also explained that at his previous transit attempt around two months ago, he saw two unmarked cars, Volkswagen and Opel, with German license plates at the detention site (next to several cars of the Greek police).

The masked men took the group to a detention site around thirty minutes away, which some of the other people detained there told the respondent was located in Alexandroupoli. The respondent said it was a police station and they were detained in a big room. Before they were taken into that room, they were told to get undressed:

“*Like the last times, they told us to get naked – completely naked. And they kept hitting us with a baton while telling us to undress. They were hitting us everywhere.*”

When they were naked, the transit group were told to enter that big room. There was no furniture whatsoever, only one toilet which was dirty and stank. The only water they could drink was from that toilet.

*"It stank really bad, but you still have to drink it because the thirst is just too strong."*

Inside the room between 110 and 120 people had been detained already, many nationalities mixed. The respondent talked to several Syrians and Afghans. Both men and women were present, everybody completely naked. One of the women had tried to hide her phone in her vagina. During a body search, it was found and she was subsequently beaten heavily. The others had to carry her as she could not walk anymore.

The respondent described that there were 16 or 17 officers present at that site in total. These "officers" were wearing blue clothes, like police uniforms, but there were no flags on them. He is not sure whether there were any numbers or signs of them, only that there was no flag. All of them were wearing black balaclavas, he could not see a single face. The respondent describes that they were laughing when hitting the people:

*"They were laughing while they were hitting us. Laughing so much. No normal person can do that. Maybe they are taking drugs, cocaine, I don't know – no normal human can do that. No way."*

The detainees were kept in the facility for the whole day. At around 18:00, some of the people in blue clothes came to the room and threw a bunch of clothes in there. Everybody had to get dressed, not really taking their own clothes but whatever they could find. They were not given back their shoes.

When they all were dressed, eight or nine men dressed in black and wearing balaclavas came, carrying guns. They told the detainees to go outside. A big white vehicle was waiting there, and one of the masked men was standing next to the door. Around 50 or 60 people from the detention space were crammed into this vehicle. Everyone was hit with a baton by the masked men standing next to it when they entered the vehicle. According to the respondent, this transfer of 50/60 people occurred two times to move around 120 people. The rest of the group had to wait for the same vehicle to return.

The authorities drove them to the river, with the lights of the vehicle turned off. The respondent says that at this point, the masked men were talking to them very nicely. One of them was asking him *"where did you want to go, Albania? Try again next time!"* They also told them not to speak.

The masked men readied one small dinghy and drove the people across, seven or eight at once. There were two people handling the boat, the respondent thinks they were either Afghans or Pakistani. When he reached the Turkish side of the river, the respondent started cursing the men on the Greek side. They walked for a while and found some houses. They knocked on several doors and were given water, bread and slippers. They went to a bus stop. They didn't have any money so they started asking people for money and after a while had enough money for the trip to Istanbul.

29/08/2020

## “THESSALONIKI POLICE REPORTEDLY DESTROY PEOPLE-ON-THE-MOVE'S LEGAL DOCUMENTS ”

**Date and time:** August 29, 2020 19:00

**Location:** Greek-Turkish border, near Ipsala, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.961815195273, 26.346391389425

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 102 person(s), age: mixed , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** destruction of personal belongings, threats of violence

**Police involved:** 4 plain clothed officers, 20 police officers (Thessaloniki), unknown number of Greek police and soldiers at the Greek-Turkish border, riot vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a 28-year-old man from Algeria. At 19:00 on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2020, he and a friend (another Algerian man of a similar age) were at a train station in Thessaloniki, Greece. A large group of people-on-the-move, exceeding 30 people, had gathered at the station intending to board a freight train to North Macedonia.

While waiting for a train on the railway tracks, an Afghani man warned the respondent and his friend that two plain-clothed police officers were approaching. The men fled to the other side of the station, however, they were apprehended by another pair of plain-clothed officers. The officers did not display their police IDs.

Meanwhile, an additional 20 Greek police officers dressed in blue uniforms entered the station and apprehended 30 people-on-the-move. All those detained were collected together and told to sit on the ground near the tracks. According to the respondent, the police “*searched everybody*” and “*broke all of their mobile phones.*” “*They break their phones because they need the phone for maps,*” he explained.

The respondent reportedly also witnessed the police officers “*tear apart*” the documentation of two people-on-the-move. He remarked:

“*One Syrian guy had a police paper and another Afghani guy had a white card, and they destroyed them.*”

White cards, or International Protection Applicant Cards, are provided to individuals who have lodged an asylum claim in Greece. Following a short wait of under one hour, the 30 detainees were loaded onto a *"big blue bus."* This description matches that of the riot vans used by the Greek police. The inside of the van was partitioned into 12 cells and the group was distributed among them. The van then drove for 10 minutes to what the respondent called *"a closed police station."* Based on the duration of this journey and the site of apprehension, this is presumably Thessaloniki Police headquarters. Here, they waited for 10 minutes and a further 12 people-on-the-move were loaded into the van; one in each cell.

*"No one asked [where] they [were] bringing us. No one from the police tried to explain to us the situation. Everyone was scared."*

Now 42 in number, the group was transported to another police station. The respondent could not remember exactly where they were brought to but suggested it was either Lasmos or Xanthi (North-Eastern Greece). Both locations correspond to the journey time of two hours experienced by the respondent. The respondents friend stated he thought that they were in Lasmos.

After a wait of four hours, in which everyone remained in the van parked outside the station, four vehicles arrived into which the group was loaded. The respondent testified that these vehicles were *"normal white vans without windows."* They were then taken directly to the Greek-Turkish border. The drive lasted 2-3 hours.

When asked if he attempted to claim asylum, the respondent replied, *"we knew they would push us back to Turkey, so it doesn't matter if we would ask them or not."*

At the border, the respondent was received by what he described as a contingent of Greek police officers and soldiers, wearing balaclavas and armed with batons. He could not determine their number. The officers and soldiers corralled the group of people-on-the-move into a concealed, wooded area near the Meric River. After the officers and soldiers threatening to beat them if they were not quiet, the respondent claims that Greek personnel asked if anyone in the group spoke English. Three men, whom the respondent alleges were Afghani, replied that they knew the language and were subsequently escorted away and "spoken to" by members of the force.

With nine others, the respondent was later loaded into a dingy. It was manned by the same three English-speaking Afghani men who the Greek personnel had summoned earlier. The respondent couldn't say what motivated these men to pilot the dingy, nor the content of their 'negotiations' with the Greek officers, as it took place out of sight and earshot.

While he was being ferried across the river, the respondent saw another *"bus of sixty"* arrive at the riverside, who were pushed back in the same fashion over the river. The precise location of the push back is difficult to ascertain. On their approach to the Greek side of the border, the respondent documented passing a *"small village"* and driving down a *"mud road"* to reach the river. Once in Turkey, he met two soldiers from the Turkish Army who informed him that he was in the *"Ipsala area"*. The respondent's walk from the site of the push back to Ipsala took one and a half hours. During the entirety of this episode, the respondent was not given any food, water, or allowed to go to the toilet.

28/08/2020

## “RESPONDENTS REQUESTED ASYLUM IN A POLICE STATION AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY PUSHED BACK”

**Date and time:** August 28, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Meric River, Ipsala, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.929232, 26.393941

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 36, 38, 60 , from: Egypt

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** no violence used, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Unknown number, Greek police officers in blue uniform; police officers in black uniform, wearing balaclava

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent shared his and his family's account of the way they were pushed back from Greece to Turkey. He reports that he arrived in Thessaloniki on the 28th of August, 2020 together with his brother and 60-year-mother (all from Egypt). Following the advice of other asylum seekers in the city, they went to a police station to apply for asylum and receive documentation attesting to their status as asylum seekers. They were referred to a second police station, where he was told he would be able to do so. At the second police station, they expressed their will to apply for asylum. The police officers informed them that they will be detained and released 24 hours later when issued the necessary documents.

The police officers proceeded to take their belongings, phones, clothes, money, and documentation from their country of origin that would support their asylum claim, and place them in a holding cell. The respondent states that one police officer took photos with his mobile phone, but that their fingerprints were not taken and they were not asked to sign any document.

The respondent describes that that night (28th of August), they were taken out of the cell and placed in a car. They were told they will be transferred to a different location "to sign for paper". The car drove for approximately one hour and then they were transferred to another car that drove them for three hours, "in the woods", somewhere close to the border with Turkey. They were told to get out of the car and the police officers wearing black uniforms accompanied them for the walk until the river bank of the Meric. There, other officers wearing black clothes and balaclavas were pumping an inflatable boat with air. The respondent and family were placed in the boat with two officers and crossed the river.

This account records the 3rd pushback the respondent and his family experienced from Greece. The first pushback took place from a Greek village close to the border with Turkey. The second pushback took place from Komotini in the Greek interior.

**27/08/2020**

**“IF WE HAD KNOWN, WE WOULD NOT HAVE COME TO THESSALONIKI. BUT I THOUGHT WE HAVE PAPERS, WE HAVE UNHCR DOCUMENTS, NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO US!”**

**Date and time:** August 27, 2020 09:00

**Location:** Thessaloniki, Greece

**Coordinates:** 40.654674, 22.902305

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 80 person(s), age: 3-50 years , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria

**Minors involved?:** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Officers in Greek police uniform, people dressed in black with balaclavas, unmarked white van, prisoner transport vehicle, red lorry

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent had been living in Greece for 10 months. He stayed in Patras most of that time and tried to reach North Macedonia several times. In the morning on the 27th of August 2020, he took a bus to Thessaloniki together with three other people. When he left the bus station, 10 police officers came on motorbikes together with two cars with several people in civilian clothes. They asked the respondent and his companions for their papers. All four of them had valid Khartias. The officers took their Khartias, as well as their phones.

Without being told anything about where they were being taken or what would happen to them, they had to get into an unmarked van. The van started driving around Thessaloniki, collecting additional people. When they had put between 15 and 20 people in total into the van, they took them to a place the respondent described as a metro station, still inside Thessaloniki. At this metro station, there were several police cars and some unmarked cars. The officers took all of the people's belongings, including belts, but they did not take their money. They conducted body searches on everyone. Subsequently, the respondent and the other people apprehended by the police had to get into a car that the respondent described as a prisoner transport vehicle, with official marks of the Greek police.

They drove for around two hours and arrived in a police station, in a very reckless way. Between 30 to 50 people had already been gathered there and they told the respondent that this police station was located in Xanthi. The respondent and the other people apprehended by the police were kept there for around two hours with no water and no food, during which time an additional 10 people were brought in. All of the officers at that police station were wearing the Greek police uniform. The respondent told several of them that he and his three friends had valid papers. The police officers told the respondent and his friends to “just wait”.

After more or less two hours, the respondent and a total of 20 people were taken into the same type of vehicle that had taken them to Xanthi. This time they drove for around 3 hours and arrived in some kind of warehouse. The respondent could not see the building from outside as the vehicle stopped inside the building.

*“If we had known, we would not have come to Thessaloniki. But I thought we have papers, we have UNHCR documents, nothing will happen to us!”*

Inside the warehouse, there was a big hall in which around 80 people had already gathered. Three officers in police uniform searched them and beat them with batons. They took all the money from everyone. The respondent had 400€ on him, his friend 200€. The officers also took their shoes. Throughout all of this, the police officers did not talk to the respondent or the others with him.

They had to wait for a few hours. The respondent said the group of 80 people was of very mixed nationalities and ages. He said there were definitely some people from Afghanistan, Pakistan and he clearly remembers one Syrian family with small kids.

After a while, the police divided the people into two groups. The police took one group away first and then came back for the other, which the respondent was a part of. Around midnight on August 27, they had to board a red lorry and were taken to the Evros River. At this point, there were six or seven men in “commando uniforms”, described as black clothes and balaclavas, plus three or four officers in Greek police uniform.

The respondent describes that as soon as they all got off the lorry, one of the “commando” men launched a camera drone that he used to observe activity on the Turkish side of the Evros river. Meanwhile, some of the other officers and commandos got one rubber dinghy ready. Two of the people dressed in black were speaking Arabic, they were the ones who took the boat across the river.

Around 15 people were taken onto the boat at once. The Arabic speakers did not drive the boat but used a rope tied across the river to get it to the other side. It took around 30 min until all 80 people had been taken to the Turkish side of the river.

*“All the way to the border we were crying. When we arrived in Turkey, I could not believe what had happened. I thought I was dreaming.”*

They proceeded to walk through the forest, barefoot, until Turkish police found them. They gave them water and let them continue. They continued walking to Ipsala. The respondent says

he thinks they were walking for 5 hours in total but was not sure at all. From the main road in Ipsala, they took a taxi to Istanbul (paid by friends upon arrival). They arrived around 8 in the morning, less than 24 hours after they had arrived in Thessaloniki the day before.

*"I lost my mind since I was returned to Turkey. I even lost my English. I was an English teacher in Afghanistan, now I can't even find simple words. I lost all my dreams."*

24/08/2020

## "HELD IN AN UNOFFICIAL POLICE STATION IN THESSALONIKI AND PUSHED BACK TO TURKEY IN A GROUP OF 55"

**Date and time:** August 24, 2020 21:00

**Location:** Evros/Meric River, Edirne, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.576830819903, 26.593777202354

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 55 person(s), age: 6-60 years old , from: Pakistan, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek persons in plain clothes (no police IDs shown), Greek army, unmarked black car, unmarked white van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, no translator present

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 28-year-old man from Algeria, was in Kamara district of Thessaloniki on the 22nd of August 2020, when four persons in plainclothes approached him at 18:00. They asked him for his documents ("khartia"), claiming that they were the police. However, they did not show any official identification. Our respondent did not have the document, so they took him into a black personal car with no police signs and drove him to a place, apparently, an informal police station near Kamara, Thessaloniki, which was about a 10-minute drive away.

The place was an apartment in a residential building with no flags or any signs of an official state office, and no police cars parked in front. There were two offices in the flat and three cells for detained persons. All of the “officers” working there, two men and one woman, were wearing plain clothes and none of them showed the respondent any police badge or other identification document at any point. They were speaking Greek to each other.

When they brought him to the “station”, the “officers” took our respondent’s fingerprints, all personal information, and photographs. This made him think that he would be issued a police registration document, a “khartia.” He spent a night there in the cell. He was not treated violently, was given food and water, and had access to toilets. All of his valuables were confiscated and stolen – his mobile phone, money, silver rings, and other jewelry.

The next day, 10 more people from Pakistan were brought and put in the cell together with the respondent and they all spent another night there. On the 3rd day (24th August 2020), at around 15:00, they brought them all together to a large white van with seats inside, but no windows and no police signs. They drove for 20-25 minutes to a city near Thessaloniki, where they changed the vehicle. The place looked like a closed camp, a detention center for foreigners. They waited there for about 10 minutes until another vehicle arrived, which was the same as the previous one, a large unmarked white van for people’s transportation with no windows and Greek registration plates. The persons driving the second van were also wearing plain clothes.

They put all 11 people into the van and brought more people with other cars, who were also put into the same van. Altogether, there were about 40 people squeezed inside. *“It was so hot, I couldn’t breathe in there,”* the respondent shared.

After a 3 hour drive, the van stopped at a large building that might have been a police station or a military post near the Turkish border. 15 other people were brought and put into the van, bringing the total to 55 people. The group included old men, two women, one small child, and minors. Around 20:00, they were all brought to the Evros/Meriç River.

At the border, there were around 12-15 people, identified by the respondent as Greek soldiers wearing army pants, black t-shirts, and balaclavas. No flags were visible on their uniforms, and they spoke Greek to each other. They immediately started beating the people. They used metal batons and beat everyone except women and children. The mistreatment at the border lasted for about 40-50 minutes. The respondent’s back was hurt from the beating. *“It was dark and we couldn’t see who would beat us, the beatings came by surprise,”* the respondent said. Some people’s shoes were confiscated by the soldiers.

None of the people was given a chance to express the intent of applying for asylum in Greece. They were not allowed to speak to the officers or look at them. *“If you want to speak to them, they will directly beat you,”* the respondent explained.

There was one black-blue inflatable rubber dinghy on the river, operated by two persons of Pakistani origin, according to the respondent’s evaluation of their outlook and language. They were wearing balaclavas. They were driving the dinghy back and forth, picking up people in groups of 15. When they arrived on the other side of the river, our respondent’s group started yelling at the dinghy drivers and throwing stones at them for

collaborating in the violent pushback. The masked dinghy drivers did not reply. According to the knowledge in the migrant community that our respondent shared with us, the Greek authorities are systematically using people from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries as dinghy-drivers during pushbacks across the Evros/Meriç River. The respondent witnessed it in most of the eight cases in which he was pushed-back to Turkey. The dinghy drivers did not speak with the Greek soldiers, but it seemed as if they were in agreement. According to rumors in the migrant community, the Greek authorities promise these migrants Greek residency and legal documents in exchange for their collaboration in the illegal pushback procedure.

According to our respondent's observations, another mass pushback must have taken place this night on the Evros/Meriç River. There must have been other cars bringing people to different points at the riverside. The officers must have been loading cars with people, bringing them to the border for the pushback, and then returning to get another load of people, and so on. He concluded this after meeting people in Turkey that were pushed-back on the same night. In his case, at no time during the entire process was he shown any official identification by the officers involved in the pushback.

After being pushed-back, the respondent slept in the woods for about 4 hours with a large group of people and then walked to the village of Uzunköprü (Turkey), which was about 70 kilometers away from the pushback point. He described how on the way, individuals he believed to be Turkish army officers attempted to stop them by shouting, but they ran away and dispersed. Our respondent remained together with his 3 friends. He did not have any navigation and did not know where they were, but was able to find the way due to his previous pushback experience. They received some money from the locals in Uzunköprü, with which they bought bus tickets and continued their way to Istanbul.

**24/08/2020**

**“WE DID NOT WANT TO PUT OUR CHILDREN THROUGH ALL THAT SO TO PROTECT THEM, WE PREFERRED TO RETURN DIRECTLY. THE SHIP CHASED US UNTIL WE HAD RETURNED TO TURKISH WATERS.”**

**Date and time:** August 24, 2020 02:30

**Location:** Greek waters off of Kos

**Coordinates:** 36.924980262515, 27.311825192773

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 18 person(s), age: 3-50 years old , from: Palestine, Syria, DR Congo, Somalia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), puncturing dinghy

**Police involved:** Minimum 4 men dressed in black with balaclavas

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On August 24, a group of 18 people, amongst them three children, left Bodrum at 2.30 am in the direction of the island of Kos.

Directly after entering the Greek waters, a ship with three officers approached them. The ship had been waiting in the dark. The respondent reported the presence of two other smaller ships with hoisted Greek flag, but none of them interacted with them. The bigger ship that had been waiting at the border between the Greek and Turkish waters was described as a “war ship”, without a flag or a label. The officers, minimum 4, were wearing black clothes and balaclavas. The respondent recognized them as wearing the same uniform as officers who had violently pushed back him on the land border several months ago. He remembers that they spoke German with each other then, and therefore supposed they also spoke German in this pushback but did not actually hear them speak it this time.

The masked men told them to stop and tried to cut holes into their dinghy with something the respondent described as a long stick with a knife on top. They also attempted to hit the group with it, but the driver managed to flee. All of the passengers insisted that they wanted to return to Turkey so they drove back.

The respondent says he was well aware of what would have happened if they would not have been able to escape, describing that they would have taken their belongings away, beat them and finally returned them on life rafts.

He said: “We did not want to put our children through all that so to protect them, we preferred to return directly. The ship chased us until we had returned to Turkish waters.” They returned to Bodrum where the Turkish police apprehended them and issued travel permits so they could return to Izmir.

**19/08/2020**

**“THEY BEAT EVERYONE. EVEN THE WOMEN. EXCEPT THE CHILDREN...”**

**Date and time:** August 19, 2020 22:00

**Location:** North East of Nea Vyssa, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.610833, 26.593551

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 13 person(s), age: Respondent: 35 , from: Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12 Greek policemen, 1 blue police pickup truck, 1 brown boat

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 35 years old Syrian man, was apprehended shortly after crossing from the Turkish region of Edirne into Greece, approximately on the 19th of August 2020. He was travelling with a group of a total of 13 people, from Syria and Iraq, among which 3 women and 6 children. This was his third attempt to enter Greece, and his third pushback.

In the mid afternoon, while walking through the woods on the Greek side of the Evros/Meriç river in the proximity of the town of Orestiada, the group was stopped by a patrol of 6 people wearing "police" labelled clothes and masks to cover their faces. These masked people, which the respondent referred to as "commanders", ordered the group to sit down, to keep their head bowed down and to not look at them, enforcing the order through beatings with retractable rubber batons.

*"They beat everyone. Even the women. Except the children"* said the respondent, who recalled being hit on his back with the batons.

Following the beating, the "commanders" searched one by one members of the group, seizing their documents and belongings. Reportedly, the respondent was stripped off of his phone and his "kimlik" (Turkish identity card). Afterwards, the 6 "commanders" made a phone call and were soon joined by another 5 or 6 police officers, wearing the same outfit, who arrived on a blue pickup truck with flashing lights on the roof, and towing behind a brown boat.

The group was made to sit in that place for a few hours, until it went dark, therefore after 20:00 at the date of the episode, and at around 22:00 according to the respondent. All the people were made to get onto the pickup truck and were driven for a short distance, to another location that the respondent identified as the Greek-Turkish frontier line North-East of the town of Nea Vyssa.

Upon reaching that location in the woods, the group was ordered to walk towards the river, before being split into two smaller groups, which were made to embark the boat and to sit with their heads bowed down. One of the "commanders" was driving the boat. With two trips across the river, the groups were driven to an island that lies in the middle of the Greek-Turkish border, and finally they were left there.

The group found itself stranded there without any means of communication and any food, nor any tools to light a fire and get warm. They searched for a higher spot in the island and started

screaming for help. They were eventually rescued by a Turkish army troop and brought back into Turkey.

19/08/2020

## “WE WERE SCREAMING IS THIS EUROPE? WHERE IS EUROPE? WHERE IS THE HUMANITY?”

**Date and time:** August 19, 2020 04:00

**Location:** Greek waters off of Skala Sikamineas, Lesvos

**Coordinates:** 39.414266853462, 26.344998559766

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 41 person(s), age: 4 months to 50 years , from: Palestine, Syria, DR Congo, Somalia, Eritrea, Lebanon

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 2 HCG officers, 3 men in grey shirts and shorts, 3 men wearing black clothes and balaclavas, speaking German.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** josoor

### ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 19th of August, 2020, a group of 34 adults, of which eight or nine were women, two were infants, and around six were children left the Turkish coast in a rubber dinghy at 04:00. When they were in Greek waters, around 1km off the northern coast of Lesvos, the respondent described how a grey Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) boat approached.

On the deck of that ship were two officers wearing HCG uniforms. Their faces were visible because they were not in masks. The HCG approached the dinghy, forced it to stop, and told the people to hand over the fuel which they did. Then that ship left again. The respondent describes the desperation they felt at that moment:

*“We were screaming is this Europe? Where is Europe? Where is the humanity?”*

About 20 or 30 minutes later, another ship came. The respondent described that it was grey and white and had an EU flag on it. Onboard that ship were three men in grey shirts and shorts. One was holding binoculars that had the EU flag on them. This ship drove left and right, creating waves to push the dinghy back. The Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) was present on the other side, filming it all and creating waves with a similar motion to push the boat the other way.

Around 07:00, the boat with the EU flag approached the dinghy again and told the people to come aboard. There they took their phones, bags, food, money and told them not to speak. The officials onboard then made a radio/phonecall.

Soon after, the respondent saw a small boat approaching very fast. It was dark grey and had a German flag on it. The respondent remembers two 300ps Yamaha engines and one chair for the driver. On it were three men with black clothes and balaclavas who were speaking German to each other.

Two of them went aboard the larger vessel with the EU flag and proceeded to prepare two orange life rafts. They made the women and children get onto them first, then all the others. One of the German-speaking men pushed the respondent into the life raft forcefully.

When the whole group was on the life rafts, the German speaking men threw all their bags and possessions overboard from the big ship, got onto their small boat, and left. The larger vessel with the EU flag then left as well. Then 20 or 30 min later, a TCG vessel came and took them back to Karaburun in Turkey. Referring to the passage of events, the respondent shared:

*"I hope to go to safety one day. I miss my child so much."*

14/08/2020

## "THEY HAD TO DRINK WATER FROM THE TOILETS IN DETENTION"

**Date and time:** August 14, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Greek-Turkish border, near Edirne

**Coordinates:** 41.1517222, 26.5137964

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 50 person(s), age: Unknown , from: Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** kicking, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek police officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is a young mother of a six month old baby, of Syrian nationality. She was part of a group of approximately 40 persons that crossed the Evros border together with other families. After crossing into Greece, the group walked for days "by the mountains and the forests" to avoid being spotted, without food or water. Five days later they were intercepted by

police officers. The respondent reports the group stopping for a rest, when she was woken up by a splash of water on her face and saw three police officers, wearing black clothes, carrying weapons and batons.

The group was loaded into a white van with no windows and driven for approximately one hour and a half. By the time they arrived at the detention place it was dark. The respondent could not describe the building or its surroundings. She states she was placed in a detention cell that accommodated around 47 people, her group and an addition of 7 people others. She describes the inside of the building as resembling a police station, small, and *“a lot of police officers and a lot of toilets”*. They were held at this location for 2 days and 2 nights. They were denied food and water despite asking, especially for their children. The respondent describes how they had to drink water from the toilets in detention.

She describes the police officers wearing black clothes with shirts bearing the word *“POLICE”* on them, and some of them having their faces covered *“like with a scarf”*. After 2 days and 2 nights, the detainees were loaded into a green army car, *“completely closed”*, fitting around 50 people inside, and driven for about one hour before reaching the river. Once they reached the river (August 14, 2020), they were taken out of the car but then they were loaded back in, when the authorities on the Greek side spotted activity on the Turkish side. The respondent states that the Greek police loaded everyone back in the car when they saw the Turkish border guards at the same location, on the other side of the river.

The group was driven to another location where they were ferried on the river to Turkey. The respondent recalls about 5 Greek police officers present, all of them had their faces covered and were wearing black clothing. The boat could fit about 13 people inside and was driven back and forth by a Syrian man, who *“was working with the police”* according to the respondent.

The respondent described violence against the group, mostly against the men in the group, batons hits and kicking. Their belongings were taken, their phones and their money. The police did not take the money in her possession, but her phone was taken as well as everyone else's. While giving the testimony, she stated:

*“The only thing that I wish [is] for the Greek people to be clear and fair with people because there are families and children [involved].”*

**27/07/2020**

**“MY 11 YEAR OLD SON YELLED AT THE GREEK SOLDIERS, BEGGING THEM FOR MERCY AND HUMANITY, CONVINCED WE WOULD DIE IN THAT MOMENT”**

**Date and time:** July 27, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Rhodes

**Coordinates:** 36.4340533, 28.2176379

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 25 person(s), age: 2 months to 60 years old , from: Palestine, Syria, DR Congo

**Minors involved?:** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek officers in police uniform, speaking Greek and English, then armed soldiers in military uniform

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

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

It was the third time that the respondent was pushed back. This time, they took a boat leaving from Marmaris to Rhodos Island on July 23. They managed to arrive on Rhodos island and thought they had finally succeeded.

Right after they arrived at the beach, officers approached them. Some from the group told them they wanted to continue to Germany after fleeing the war in Syria. The police officers informed them that they would take them to a camp for a few days and then transport them to Athens from where they would be free to go to wherever they wanted to. Therefore the whole group followed the officers to a prison-like detention center, with three tents and one toilet. One Syrian family was already detained there. The officers denied all their demands for water, food, medication and baby milk. They constantly asked for food but were told there was none for them. They were allowed to use the toilet, but some men from the group were forced to clean it. There were no showers and no water.

One day later, an employee allegedly from the UNHCR came and finally brought food and water. As the 2 month old baby was sick and severely dehydrated, the UNHCR worker took that family to the hospital from where they had to return to the detention center.

They stayed at that detention center for four days. On the fourth day, at 8 pm, police told them they would transfer them to Lesbos. They took all their belongings – passports, phones and money – telling them they would return it after their arrival on Lesbos. Several officers which were described as ‘soldiers’ came to accompany the group to the beach. They wore military uniforms and carried weapons. No physical violence was used.

The officers embarked the whole group on a boat. After 3 and a half hours, the group was transferred onto a floating platform. They were 25 people, 15 of them children. One 11 year old boy was blind. Two families were Congolese, one man Palestinian and all the others were Syrian. The Palestinian man has refugee status in Germany, a German lawyer working on his case for him to be able to return to Germany.

The blind child almost fell into the water while they were transferred onto the floating platform but luckily one man of the group managed to get hold of him, preventing him from falling into the sea. None of the officers reacted.

*"My eleven year old son yelled at the Greek soldiers, begging them for mercy and humanity, convinced we would die in that moment".*

After they had all been transferred onto the platform, the group was abandoned at sea. It was around 11 pm when the Greek officers left. They were drifting for five hours until 4 am. Water was coming in and they had to constantly pour it out with their hands. The waves were high.

*"I can't believe Germany allows this to happen. If they know this and do agree, I prefer to return back to the bombs in my country and die there than witness this lack of humanity and mercy."*

One man had previously managed to hide his phone in the diapers of his baby daughter, which allowed them to take videos to document their situation and call the Turkish coast guard who finally came to rescue them at 4 am.

They were subsequently taken back to Marmaris from where they went to Izmir. After several days on the streets in Izmir, the respondent and her children took a bus to Istanbul where they are currently staying. She wants to continue trying to reach Germany as she sees no future in or possibility of staying in Turkey.

22/07/2020

## "PUSHBACKS FROM THESSALONIKI: ONGOING"

**Date and time:** July 22, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Peptos, Evros

**Coordinates:** 40.92923200000001, 26.393941

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** Approximately 140 person(s), age: 30 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Morocco

**Minors involved?** Unknown

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

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In Greece, access to asylum is still limited. It started in March when the Greek government suspended the right to apply for asylum followed by the lockdown measures when the asylum service was shut down. Today, on mainland Greece, in order to submit an asylum application, a person has to call the skype service, service that is unreachable, or to present themselves at the police station and register their will for asylum. However, if they belong to a certain nationality, it is likely they will be arrested and detained throughout their asylum procedure.

The respondent is an Algerian national, 30 years of age. He had been in Greece for one month and a half before being arrested in one of the main squares of Thessaloniki. Algeria is considered a safe country of origin. Often, if stopped by the police on the street, Algerians will be detained and have their asylum procedure in detention. The measure is not in accordance with neither Greek law (Article 46(1), Law no. 4636/2019) nor with European Directives (Article 8(1) or Directive 2013/33/EU) stating that a person cannot be detained for the sole purpose of applying for asylum.

The police informed him that he will be issued a khartia (a document temporarily regularizing his stay). He was taken to a central police station and one day later was transferred to a more remote police station. He declared he was fingerprinted, photographed, and was asked to sign documents without an interpreter being provided. His belongings were all removed, including his phone and the cash he had in his possession. He was held for about 4 or 5 days.

Similarly to previously reported cases of pushbacks from Thessaloniki to Turkey, the respondent was loaded into a blue bus, with bars outside the windows, together with other 30 persons. Policemen were accompanying the transfer. They were driven for about 5 hours to an undisclosed location where around 140 persons were present. The respondent declares that they moved and held in a separate bus for some hours before being transported to the border.

It was already dark when they arrived at the river bank. The policemen who pushed them back were wearing uniforms but he cannot recall the colors. He does remember they were speaking Greek among themselves and that they were wearing balaclavas. There were around 15 policemen participating in the operation.

The respondent described that the persons driving the boats were foreigners themselves, based on their accent they must have been Syrians. The boats were provided by the police. They were crossed over that same night. The respondent has given the testimony remotely, from Istanbul, where he is currently located.

**20/07/2020**

**“THE POLICE, THEY COME TO THE ROOM AND THEY JUST BEATING PEOPLE, BEATING [...] THEY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.”**

**Date and time:** July 20, 2020 02:00

**Location:** at the Greek-Turkish border, near Meriç

**Coordinates:** 41.16936175701005, 26.31072896972656

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 15-30 , from: Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Lybia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** unknown number (a lot) of officers with black clothes and face masks; two cars and a truck

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 20th of July 2020, a group of twelve people crossed the Greek-Turkish border and entered in Greece. Upon their entry to Greece, the group split up, with four leaving to Alexandroupolis, and the other eight crossing a forest, before they were apprehended by Greek authorities with two cars near Feres, while walking along on a wide street. As the authorities approached the group, one person from the group ran away, while the rest of the people was taken to a police station in Alexandroupolis. After waiting in the station for sometime, the group was collected again at around 2:00 am. After this, Greek authorities from this station (unknown number), wearing black clothes and face masks, put the group and an additional 13 persons previously unaffiliated with the group (aged 15-30) into a truck and drove them back to the Greek-Turkish border, near Meriç. In the group there were two women (aged 22 and 25).

When the group arrived back at the border, they saw that they were near the Evros/Meriç river. The officers took them out of the vehicle and reportedly beat the group-members with batons, confiscated their personal belongings (phones, food, money, clothes, shoes) and forced them to undress. They were additional, new officers at this location.

After this, the respondent described that the officers put them on a small boat with which the group crossed the Evros river. The respondent recalled that the officers involved in the push-back were not speaking Greek, but rather in English between each other. Because of this, he inferred that they were not all Greek and referred to them as "NATO" and "European police".

After the pushback, the respondent managed to buy food, clothes and a new phone and to cross the border again, arriving then in Thessaloniki. There, (presumably on the 26th of July) the respondent was caught by officers wearing uniforms consistent with those worn by Greek police, at the bus station of Bus 2K, near the train station. After this, the authorities brought him to the detention center of Mitagogo, where he stayed for 17 days in a room with other people (all minors). At that time the respondent was still underage. During his detainment, the respondent described that the authorities repeatedly beat them with batons. The detainees repeatedly asked for medical support, but it was always denied.

After 17 days in detainment, around midday on the 11 of August, 4 policemen took 17 people from the detention center, put them in handcuffs, put them in a bus and brought them to a police station. According to the respondent, they were beaten on the bus with batons.

Once the group arrived at the police station, they were taken out of the vehicle and were led in a room, one at a time. In the room, the respondent described that there were a female "doctor" and a male police officer in a Greek police uniform. According to the respondent, during his time with the "doctor" he received an injection from a transparent liquid in his arm. No interpreter was present during this time and the respondent was not aware of what was happening exactly. When he tried to ask what was the injection, the doctor only said "it is for Corona". The respondent affirms that all of the 17 people got the injection.

After that, the respondent was released with the permission of remaining in Greece for one month.

18/07/2020

## “EVEN IF WE HAD A DOCTOR, WE WOULD NOT BRING HIM TO SEE YOU”

**Date and time:** July 18, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Uzunköprü

**Coordinates:** 41.29845431722402, 26.57094926367187

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 68 person(s), age: 4-55 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Morocco, Libya, Lebanon

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Unknown number, all Greek police uniform, 3 army lorries

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

### ORIGINAL REPORT

In the third week of July, a group of 7 people – 3 Syrians and 4 Moroccans – crossed the over the border from Turkey into Greece near Alibay/Karayousof. On the Greek side, the group described walking through several stretches of forest and then through several fields until they arrived at the hills of Lavara. As they continued, the next day they ran out of water. The group then continued walking for another day until they arrived at a place the respondent called Mantinex/ Mantinixi – most probably a village called Mavroklisi, but he could not remember the exact name.

By then they were extremely thirsty. A young Syrian in the group was so exhausted and dehydrated that he could not continue walking. The group then split up, with the Moroccan group-members continuing and the Syrian group-members spending the night in a place between Lavara and the village. On the third day without water, the Syrian splinter-group were desperate. The respondent recalled:

***“The water became a dream. I reached the point, where the water became the top priority. I must get water, not Europe. More important than the arrival in Europe was the water. My last state of mind was, just give me any water, I don’t want to reach Europe anymore. We suffered a lot.”***

Eventually, the group made their way into a village up in the hills [exact location unconfirmed]. There was a church and a graveyard. The graveyard had a water tap where they filled their

bottles and recovered for one day. Finally, when they were leaving the village, the Greek police approached the group and apprehended them. The officers were described as having drawn and pointed their firearms at the group, and ordered them to empty their bags and pockets, even pull out the strings from their shoes and remove their belts.

After this initial exchange, the group was led into a vehicle and driven to either a police station or a detention center close to Alexandroupoli, a 40 min drive from the village [likely Soufli, Tycherio, Feres or Poros]. At the station, the respondent described that they were called terrorists. The respondent asked for permission to send a message to his mother, but the officers did not allow it and reiterated that they were terrorists. The respondent recalled one of the officers taking his phone and bank card and putting it into his pocket. The Syrian boy had 20EUR. The officer took 10 EUR and gave him back 10 EUR.

After the officers searched their bodies, they put them in a place the respondent described to have looked like a storage room. It was small, around 5x6m. Four people were there, two Syrians, one Moroccan, and one Libyan. Within less than 30 minutes, five Afghans were taken into that room as well, one hour later ten Pakistanis. After another hour, a Syrian family with three kids (a girl and two boys), after that an Iranian family of six, three little girls [9, 12, and 13 years old respectively] with their parents and an uncle. After a while, a Lebanese boy, who had claimed to be Palestinian was taken there, later ten Pakistanis and five Afghans. Many more people were taken there later on as well, 68 in total. The respondent cannot recall the demographics of the whole group. All had been caught by police shortly after they had crossed the border.

On the first day in detention, the detained group-members did not receive any water or food. The next day, the kids became hungry. The adults tried to call the officers, but nobody responded for hours. Eventually an officer came and they asked him for food and water for the kids. He responded by saying "Just because you came illegally, you are illegal migrants arriving in our country like thieves." After a while, a woman came, around 40 years old. The respondent tried to convince her to bring some food for the children. She left and came back with biscuits for the children.

An hour or two later, at around 11:00 am, the respondent described that an Iranian lady in detainment began shaking, sweating, her heartbeat raised. She did not speak any English, so the respondent involved himself in the situation and translated the situation to the officers there. The same male officer from before arrived. The officer arrived, yelled at them and cursed them. The respondent looked at the officer and told him the woman is dying. He answered: "she can die, who told her to come here?" The respondent begged for an ambulance or medics or anyone who could help her. The officer replied:

***"Even if we had one, we would not bring him to see you."***

The respondent asked the officer if he would answer a question, the officer told him yes. The respondent asked:

***"Is the Greek government forbidding you to give us food and water or is it you, you don't like refugees, so you don't want to give us any water or food?"***

He replied he could not answer that question. The respondent replied: "It's fine, we got the answer, the government forbids you to give us any food or water. But if you can just give us something to support this lady." The officer looked at the respondent and told him to wait for 5

minutes. He then returned with an effervescent tablet of Vitamin C, painkiller, water, and a little food. He also told them they had two hours left before they would be sent back.

After two hours, three military lorries came and the whole group was put on them. They were searched once more, especially for phones.

The respondent asked the officer on which spot they would be pushed back to Turkey to be able to plan how to get to Istanbul then. The officer told him they would be pushed back between Uzunköprü and Ipsala, at the beginning of Uzunköprü. It turned out to be true. The same officer also recommended the group to continue walking towards the left side on the other side of Evros, as Turkish police would find them on the right and would then catch them and take them into quarantine for 15 days because of Covid- 19. All told, 68 people were pushed back over the Evros/Meric river at once and then walked to a place they cannot remember. Smugglers were waiting for them and told them they would take them to Istanbul for 1000 to 1200 Lira. They continued walking to Uzunköprü, another 10km, and went to the bus station. Some did not have any shoes left, others only flip flops.

The respondent had not heard from the Moroccans that he crossed with since they split up.

The respondent emphasized that the Greek officers did not beat anyone, except for one Egyptian man who got aggressive and cursed the officers. They beat him heavily with a wooden stick.

11/07/2020

**“THEY HAD NO MERCY AT ALL. ISN'T IT AGAINST ALL MERCY AND HUMANITY WHAT THEY DO?”**

**Date and time:** July 11, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Coast off Lesbos

**Coordinates:** 39.134673444637386, 26.62377663593751

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 40 person(s), age: 10-60 , from: Palestine, Syria, Somalia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), destruction of engine

**Police involved:** HCG officers on the panther boat with masks, men dressed in black with black masks on the RHIB, minimum 15 in total, probably 20, all spoke Greek and some English

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

A group of around 40 people from Syria, Somalia and Palestine, among them 13 children, a pregnant woman and an elderly woman, left the Turkish coast by boat towards Lesvos on 11 July.

They reached the Greek waters sometime in the morning after which Hellenic Coast Guard forces wearing black uniforms and balaclavas approached them in a vessel after 1 km in Greek waters and forced them to turn around and return to Turkey. They used both rigid-hull inflatable boats [RHIBs] and light patrol boats to accomplish this. On the RHIB, they were wearing black uniforms and balaclavas. On the light patrol boat, they were wearing Coastguard uniforms and balaclavas. There were described to be more than ten armed men in total.

According to the respondent, one of the officers spoke in English to a member of the group, who expressed their demand of asylum. The officer denied it and told them that because of COVID-19, they would not be allowed to enter the island of Lesvos and had to return to Turkey. At first, the driver of the boat didn't follow their order, so they destroyed the dinghies' engine and beat the driver. As other group members tried to protect the driver, they were also beaten with batons.

*"Haram, they had no mercy at all. Isn't it against all mercy and humanity what they do?"*

They subsequently took them to Turkish waters and then left the group there floating with the broken engine. After 7 more hours in the water, the Turkish coast guard came to rescue the victims of this pushback. They took them to a quarantine detention center, from where they were released after 15 days and left in the streets to fend for themselves.

It was the seventh pushback on sea that the respondent had to endure.

*"What shall we do? There is a war in our country, we cannot return there. And we have no future in Turkey."*

For BVMN's full investigation on this incident, click [here](#)

**05/07/2020**

## **"PEOPLE BEATEN NEARLY TO DEATH BY THE GREEK POLICE DURING A MASS PUSHBACK ACROSS EVROS/MERIC RIVER"**

**Date and time:** July 5, 2020 22:00

**Location:** Meriç river, near Meric/Ipsala, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.282617500618, 26.461431372375

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 120 person(s), age: 16-40 , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek policemen in black uniforms and balaclavas, Greek army

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken, personal information taken, papers signed, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

It was in the last days of March 2020 the interviewee, a 33 year old man from Morocco, was in Kamara, central Thessaloniki, chatting with a group of friends (who were all Greek citizens). He had been in Greece for a long time, so he spoke Greek and had local friends. On the day in question, six Greek policemen in plain clothes arrived in grey unmarked cars. They approached the group, introduced themselves as the police, and asked the respondent to show them his documents. He showed them his valid registration card ("Ausweis"). They asked him to come with them to a police station in order to check his documents. He was told he would be released shortly, so he followed them to the car. He was taken to a police station in Kalamaria, a town about 7 kilometers south of Thessaloniki.

At the Kalamaria police station, the interviewee's documents were checked and his body was searched. Then the policemen brought some documents for him to sign. The documents were written in Greek and there was no interpreter present. The interviewee can only speak Greek, but not read or write it, so he did not know what he was signing. He was convinced by the policemen that these were release papers and a part of a regular procedure, so he signed them. After that, his fingerprints and face photographs were taken. He was not given any food or water, and did not have access to toilets during custody.

Around 03:00-04:00 in the night, the interviewee was taken from his cell by 2 policemen in plain clothes and brought to the Police Headquarters ("Megalo") in Thessaloniki by car. The journey lasted about an hour. In "Megalo", there were 20 other people-on-the-move, Algerians and Moroccans, who had also been taken from the street like the respondent. There were three minors among them and the others were in their mid-20s. All of them had legal documents to stay in Greece, which were confiscated by the police. The interviewee was detained there for 5 days. All 20 people were together in one cell. The conditions were quite bad, he shared, and the police were often violent against the people. There were good and bad officers, he stated. Some of the detainees were upset and demanded an explanation of why they were kept there. They were shouting, so the "good" policeman called the "violent ones," who beat them.

After 5 days, officers came in the morning and took all 20 people from the cell, and handcuffed them. The people asked where they were being taken, but they did not receive a clear reply. The officers put the people in a large police bus and left. The bus stopped on the way and more people were loaded inside – Arabs, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Afghanis – until the bus was full, carrying around 60 people. Then they were taken to the Drama Paranesti Pre-removal Detention Centre. Their documents issued by the Greek state were never returned to them, and the cameras on everyone's mobile phones were broken in order to prevent documentation. The respondent was detained at the Drama detention center for 3 months. At the time of interview he was still in contact with friends who had been there for 6 months plus.

Upon arrival, the newcomers were put in cells in groups of 10-15 persons. The detainees were always hungry, as they were being given very little food and the food was bad, unhealthy, and made them feel sick.

*“They were only feeding us enough to survive,”*

Moreover, the detainees were not given any clothes, and were constantly subjected to insults and physical violence. When a person asked questions such as why was he kept there, complained, or asked for basic necessities such as underwear, often an argument broke out. In these cases, the guards called the officers covered with balaclavas, who beat everyone from that cell. The beatings were brutal. The respondent was beaten many times in all kinds of ways – punched, hit with batons, kicked, stamped, etc. Some people’s heads and cheeks were injured in the beatings, but the police did not care, stated the respondent.

*“They hit you in your face, in your head, your back, it’s up to them.”*

The respondent’s back was injured and at the time of interview, months later, he still had swelling on his upper arm from a beating in Drama. The injury occurred when he was being beaten and an officer attempted to hit his head with a baton, but he protected himself with his arms. In addition to physical violence and deprivation from basic necessities, the detainees were also constantly subjected to insults. They were called words that our translator was unable to state out loud because of their level of abuse.

After 3 months at the Drama detention center, on approximately 5 July 2020, the respondent was pushed-back to Turkey, together with around 120 other people. According to the respondent, they were some of the first people to be a part of the mass pushbacks from inland detention centers in Greece that he knew of. At 15:00 one day, the detainees were loaded into two large police busses, carrying about 60 people per bus. They were told that they would be taken to Amygdaleza Pre Removal Detention Facility in Athens, but they were taken to the Evros/Meriç river on the Greek-Turkish border. The bus journey lasted about 4-5 hours, so it was dark when they arrived at the border. There were several pushback points at the riverside. The bus stopped every half an hour or so and unloading people in groups of 10-15 people.

When the group with the respondent got off the bus, involving about 10 people, including 16-17 years-old minors, there were about 50-60 Greek police officers and soldiers present at the riverside, some wearing plain clothes and some in uniforms. What followed was the worst treatment the respondent said he had ever experienced. The officers confiscated people’s phones, shouted at them to shut up, telling them to go back to their countries, and brutally beat them. The officers forcefully held people’s heads and cut their hair. They gathered everyone together, ordered them to sit down and face the ground with their hands behind their heads, and started hitting them with large metal batons. Both minors and adults were attacked in this way for about 1 hour according to the respondent. Some people’s arms, legs, and heads were severely injured. The interviewee’s ribs were broken and his leg was badly injured. Two persons from the group were beaten incredibly badly and they were unable to move, apparently unconscious.

At about 22:00/23:00, the people were loaded into a dinghy and taken over the Evros river by two police officers wearing balaclavas. When they arrived at the other side of the border, they

carried the two unconscious persons out of the boat. They were afraid of the Turkish soldiers, so they had to move on and abandon them. They thought they might have died, but later learned that they had been taken to a hospital by Turkish soldiers, where they had to be treated for 26 days in order to recover.

The group of 8 walked for about 40 minutes, until they reached a village near Meriç, Turkey. Due to the covid lockdown, there was nobody around to help them. They had no clothes, mobile phones, or money, so they had no choice but to walk to the town of Edirne. But even there they could not find any help and could not get any food. The interviewee's injuries healed eventually, despite having no access to medical assistance. He returned to Thessaloniki after his recovery.

02/07/2020

## “IF YOU COME BACK TO GREECE, WE WILL KILL YOU.”

**Date and time:** July 2, 2020 20:00

**Location:** Orestiada, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.25096653462456, 26.36257571745539

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 50-55 person(s), age: 0-65 years old , from: Syria, Morocco, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, insulting, pouring water over one's head, threatening with guns, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 2 Greek police officers, 5 foreign officers in black and army-color uniforms with balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Wave - Thessaloniki

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 21-year-old man from Morocco, was apprehended by two male Greek officers clad in plain clothes, together with two of his fellow travel companions [both males from Tunisia, aged 21 and 24 years old respectively], in the village of Orestiada near the Turkish border, on 30 July, 2020, around 4:00 pm.

According to the respondent, the officers did not ask the group any questions; they just pushed the people into a white van and took them to a nearby police station. This was the 7th time the respondent had been apprehended in Greece and pushed back to Turkey. The group reportedly spent the entire night at the police station, where they were not given any food or

water for the whole day. They had to drink water from the toilet. Their phones were confiscated. The next morning, they were taken to another police station, about 15 minutes' drive away, near the border.

Upon their arrival to the second police station, the officers threw water on them and spurted water on them from a hose. The treatment there was horrible.

***“They treated us worse than animals,”*** told the respondent.

They were put together into one room with about 25 other people from various countries, which included women and children. Most of their clothes were taken from them; the men were stripped and only few clothes were returned to them, so they were very cold. Some were left with only one shoe. The officers took their money and other valuables, such as watches and jewelry. The women were searched by male officers without permission. The officers, four clad in army-color uniforms and one in a black uniform, all wore balaclava masks and spoke in foreign languages other than Greek (English, Spanish, Portuguese).

According to the respondent, these officers were physically violent with the group and beat them with metal batons, including women and children. They deprived everyone from food and water. Nobody was given a chance to ask for asylum. If someone tried to speak, they beat them. Our respondent was asked where he was from, and he was afraid to tell that he is from Morocco. The officer told him that he knew that he was from Morocco and started hitting him.

***“If you just want to say the word asylum, they will kill you,”*** the respondent said.

According to the testimony, an officer in black uniform told them: “If you come back to Greece, we will kill you.” Many people were injured. The respondent was beaten so badly with the metal batons that he could barely walk the next day. At the time of our interview, he still had bruises on his back after one month.

After a day of violence and mistreatment, the officers put more than 50 people in a large van and drove them to the border, about 10 minutes away. The van was packed with people, who had to stand ducked down to fit in and could barely breathe. An old man had breathing problems and he collapsed when they arrived at the Meriç river. He didn't receive any assistance; the migrants were ordered to pick him up. The beatings continued at the riverside. The migrants were forbidden to lift their gaze from the ground and were threatened with guns. Those who looked at the officers were brutally beaten by the masked men in black and green army uniforms.

***“If you look at them, they can hit you until you die. They don't care about this. We were so scared,”*** our interviewee told us.

The Greek officers then put the group in boats of about 17-18 persons, operated by 2 persons from Afghanistan and an Iraqi, who took the people across the river. The people in distress, scared and beaten, were left wandering through a forest in cold and rain with very few clothes, until they reached the village of Alibey in Turkey. There, the villagers helped the people, who were exhausted and had not eaten for almost 3 days. They also called an ambulance for the old man who had a breathing problem. The rest of the people continued to the Meriç village and towards Istanbul. They were afraid of being apprehended by the Turkish police and being taken to a detention center, due to the danger of the coronavirus pandemic. The respondent arrived back in Greece on the 19th of August.

21/06/2020

## “WITH OUR HANDS HANDCUFFED, THEY THREW US INTO THE WATER OF EVROS RIVER”

**Date and time:** June 21, 2020 21:00

**Location:** İpsala, Edirne, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.93975254650879, 26.37059505273438

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 80-90 person(s), age: 6 months to 50 years old , from: Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, DR Congo

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, handcuffed, thrown into river

**Police involved:** Around 20 officers involved, some in blue Greek uniform, some dressed in black with masks, a few speaking Turkish

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** josoor

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent had been living in Greece for many months and had applied for asylum, settling in Athens. He had his first interview and had been issued a white card which is valid until September 2020. He had been waiting for his final interview, set for May 2021. He went to Alexandroupolis from Athens as part of his job. The purpose of the trip was to visit a stables where his employer wanted to buy a horse (the respondent works in a professional stables in Athens).

On the morning of 21st June, at around 10:00, police in blue uniform stopped him in a town 20km from Alexandroupolis and asked to see his papers. He did not understand as he couldn't speak Greek. Because he was unable to answer the police responded by beating him with a wire. After several minutes, a white van came, driven by a man dressed in black and wearing a black mask. The respondent was forced to get in the car and was taken to a police station, the drive took about two hours, there were no windows in the van so the respondent doesn't know where it was.

He was detained there for two hours and then taken to a detention center where 80 to 90 other people were detained. This included both men and women from Afghanistan, Iran, Kurdistan and different other nationalities.

Police there took everything from them – money, mobile, belt, clothes, shoelaces and whatever else they had – and put the people into cells.

Two policemen in uniform and one “*commando soldier*” (dressed in black and wearing ski mask) were taking refugees one by one to a room. Whether he/she was man or woman, they were beating him/her violently and brutally before loading them into a dark green camouflage lorry.

They were beating them not with batons, but with thick wooden sticks. The police took off their clothes and left them naked. The respondent was severely hit on his torso, arms, knees and head. In his case it was specifically one “*commando*” man cooperating with two uniformed officers.

Other than these three, around 20 policemen and other staff were present at the detention center. The respondent says that all of them spoke Greek and some spoke Turkish as well.

Access to toilets, water and food was denied throughout:

*“From the time I got arrested till the time we were brought to Evros river, we were not allowed to have access to any basic needs.”*

After eight hours in detention, the military style lorry took them to the Evros river. The drive was around 30min. They proceeded beating them for one hour and used zip ties to handcuff them. With their hands handcuffed, they threw them into the water of Evros river. The respondent and some others couldn’t swim, other refugees helped them stay afloat. This was around sunset, approximately 21:00 on 21st June 2020.

When they arrived on Turkish territory after crossing the river by swimming, the respondent was unconscious. Afghan, Kurdish, Syrian, Arab and Iranian guys with their money helped them reach Istanbul by paying a driver to take them.

The respondent can’t remember anything after they threw them into the river but his friends told him that from the border they went by foot to a place where they called a taxi from the phone of a Turkish local and arrived in Istanbul a few hours later.

The respondent only woke up once they had arrived in Istanbul. He says he is still in unbearable pain. His whole body is bruised due to severe blows (pictures and video of the bruises available). He was beaten and kicked on his head, torso, abdomen, arms and legs by the one commando man at the detention center that he had to throw up several times.

The respondent later took a video of his injuries and said:

*“This is what they did to us. Do we have the right to asylum or not? Does the international law not say that every human being has the right to ask for asylum? What kind of right is this? Does the European Union have the right of beating and torture? How can the commandos beat us like this! And then put you in the river while your hands are tied! This is our situation as refugees. They beat every part of your body with a stick. They take you to a room and then beat everyone. They have neither mercy nor compassion*

*towards women nor men. They are taking your money, phones and then put you in river while you hands are cuffed.”*

20/06/2020

## “PLEASE BE SILENT, IT IS OUR GOVERNMENT DECIDING WHAT WE DO WITH YOU, I AM SORRY”

**Date and time:** June 20, 2020 01:00

**Location:** İpsala, Edirne, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.9562697, 26.2680259

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 60 person(s), age: 20-50 years old , from: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Syria, Iraq

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, sexual assault, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 12-14 police officers; 20 police officers, some in uniform and some in black clothes with masks

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** josoor

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The transit group of 15 left Istanbul at 23:00 on 17th June 2020 and headed towards the GR-TR border. At 22:00 on 18th June 2020, they left Ipsala towards Greece, crossed the border and proceeded on foot through eggplant fields for one and a half hours nearby to a highway. At 00:00, the respondent alleged police officers (some in black uniforms wearing masks) apprehended the transit group and ordered some group members in German and Albanian to take off their shoes and clothes; the respondent believes they were ‘Commandos’. Whenever anybody in the transit group looked at the officers, they were beaten. Several members of the group (including the respondent) repeatedly asked for asylum; the officers laughed at them and said,

*“you have no reason to be here...shut up”*

When the respondent asked where her human rights were, the officers replied,

***“you don’t have any rights here, it’s our country, we don’t want you here...you are lying”***

The officers forced the transit group into vehicles and repeatedly beat the men on their backs before taking them to a police station.

Here, they forced the transit group to hand over their phones, documents, backpacks and money. They were ordered to undress to their underwear and had their bodies searched; the respondent alleged the male officers searched the two women’s underwear and repeatedly touched them inappropriately. When the officers did find anything on a person, they ordered them to fully undress in front of the whole group. The officers handed the transit group disinfectant, gloves and papers (some with the UNHCR logo) in a foreign language. No one in the group signed any of papers, no fingerprints were taken and no fee was paid. After this, the officers forced the transit group into a container, roughly five-six meters long, with a total of 60 people inside.

For 36 hours the transit group were detained in this container without water and food. The two women were allowed to go to the toilet but none of the men were; the respondent alleged it was very hot and felt the oxygen level inside was extremely low. Approximately 12-14 officers were involved in this event at the police station.

At 01:00 on 26th June 2020, everyone in the container was removed and taken were taken to the border. The respondent alleged that 20 police officers (some dressed in black) were involved in the pushback. Some threatened they would kill members of the transit group if they did not stay absolutely quiet during the pushback; one of them told the respondent,

***“please be silent, it is our government deciding what we do with you, I am sorry. Tell them Germany paid lots of money to protect us from you, many German soldiers here”***

The transit group were taken to Ipsala by boat, where Turkish police apprehended them and forced them to return back to Greece. The respondent started crying and was desperate, with no shoes, phone, and no money left. She was released by authorities while the rest of the transit group were forced back into Greek territory.

**07/06/2020**

**“I STILL FEEL PAIN IN MY BACK”**

**Date and time:** June 7, 2020 04:00

**Location:** On the river Evros, near the Turkish town of Meriç

**Coordinates:** 41.20112806973637, 26.323038444963156

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 31 person(s), age: One minor, the rest of the transit group were between the ages of 21-35 , from: Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 12+ Greek police officers, 2 Greek police cars, 1 blue police van, 1 boat (colour and type unknown).

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, fingerprints taken, photos taken

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 6th of June, the respondent in question was illegally pushed back from Greece to Turkey across the Evros River. The respondent is 21 years old and from Algeria.

The respondent was arrested in Kamara, Thessaloniki (GRK) by Greek police at around 7:00 pm on the 5th of June. The respondent identified the officers as part of the Greek forces from their black uniforms. The officers asked the respondent whether he had identification papers (khartia and white card). As the respondent did not have any identification papers, he was arrested along with three other men from Algeria and one man from Morocco (who ranged from the ages of 25 to 30 years old). The group was handcuffed and taken in two police cars to a detention centre. Two arrestees were brought to the detention centre in one police car and the other three arrestees were transported in a separate car – each police car was supervised by two Greek police officers. The respondent does not know the exact location of the detention centre, however, he states that the car journey lasted for approximately 5-7 minutes from Kamara, Thessaloniki (GRK) [possibly the **Thessaloniki Aliens Police Directorate holding facility**].

At the detention centre, the respondent was held in a cell overnight and was given food and water. The officers took the respondent's photograph and fingerprint. The respondent was told by police that after 24 hours, he would receive identification papers. The following day, the respondent did indeed receive identification papers. On the 6th of June, a police van arrived at the detention centre with a capacity of holding 31 people. The respondent describes the police van as a dark blue. As the police van had space for five more people, the respondent was forced to board the police van. At this point, the police officers tore up the identification papers that they had produced for the respondent and took his belongings. The respondent explains that his phone, clothes, jewellery, shoes, cigarettes, and lighter was stolen. He was only allowed to bring one t-shirt with him. The respondent explains that when the police van was at capacity it consisted of men from Pakistan, Algeria, and Morocco, with the oldest man being around 35 years old. The respondent explains that there was one minor in the vehicle. The transit group arrived at the Greek city, Alexandroupoli, at 10:00 pm. The transit group was held in a detention centre outside of Alexandroupoli (GRK) – likely one of the border-guard outposts which **serve a detention centres** [Feres, Tycherio or Soufli] in the area. A similarly described detention and push-back process from February can be accessed **here**.

On 7th June 2020 and at 4 am, the transit group was taken in another van to the border region. On this journey, the respondent explains that there were 10 officers present. Two of the officers began beating the group with batons. The respondent explains that the two officers who were

beating the transit group were wearing dark blue clothing with badges and were large in stature. The respondent explains that he was beaten on his arms and his back. He states that:

*I still feel pain in my back.*

At the border, the respondent explains that the police officers had men from Pakistan assisting them with the pushback operation. The respondent explains that the men from Pakistan were given black balaclavas to wear and had been told by the police officers that if they helped with the pushback operations for a month, they would be given Greek identification papers. There was one boat with a capacity of 14 people that went back and forth across the Meriç/Evros river, pushing smaller groups of people back from Greece to Turkey (exact location unknown). The respondent explains that it went back and forth three times to push the entire transit group back to Turkey. The respondent explains that the boat did not have a working engine and hence was being maneuvered by the Pakistani men.

Once on Turkish land, the transit group headed to the small town of Meriç (TU). The respondent was able to make his way back to Istanbul (TU) at noon. The respondent crossed the Turkey-Greece border again at midnight, however, was arrested at Alexandroupoli (GRK) and pushed back to Turkey. The respondent stayed in Turkey for another two days before crossing the Turkey-Greece border again with a friend, however, this time he was caught in Komotini (GRK) and was pushed back to Turkey. The respondent successfully managed to cross the Turkey-Greece border on his third attempt and made his way back to Thessaloniki (GRK).

06/06/2020

## “A THESSALONIKI POLICE INTERVENTION LEADS DIRECTLY TO A MASS PUSHBACK TO TURKEY”

**Date and time:** June 6, 2020 01:00

**Location:** Meric river, Ipsala

**Coordinates:** 40.92923200000001, 26.393941

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 35 person(s), age: 19, 20 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6 police officers at the border, 15-20 police officers in Thessaloniki

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On 5th June 2020, people were gathered at a regular food distribution where outreach groups provide material support to transit populations in the Thessaloniki area. During the afternoon distribution, an intervention by the Thessaloniki policeforce took place.

Officers arrived at the distribution on motorbikes and in cars, fully equipped, in large numbers, between 15 to 20, *“in the context of the implementation of operational planning to deal with delinquency and the identification of persons residing illegally in the country”*, as stated in a **press release** announcing the raid. The police officers arrived in a coordinated group and blocked side roads, entrances and exits to prevent people from fleeing.

The officers were dressed in black uniforms with “police” while others were in civil clothes with official vests. The officers separated those with papers and those without. The officers rounded up around 20 people without documents and took them away to a police station in the Thessaloniki area with the promise of issuing them a document to regularize their stay in Greece for a period.

### **Video of people being rounded up from the area and walked away by police:**

**<https://www.borderviolence.eu/wp-content/uploads/VideoJune5.mp4>**

On the 6th June 2020, one of the individuals who had been taken in this incident contacted a BVMN volunteer and informed them that he and others were in Istanbul, Turkey. This person provided a full oral testimony on 7th June 2020, describing the events that passed: from their capture, to their pushback from Greek territory.

The respondent is 19 years old from Algeria and shared his story alongside another person aged 20 years old also from Algeria. The respondent states that he entered Greece in mid-May, about 15 days before he was apprehended.

He described how he was attending the food distribution in the area of Thessaloniki close to the industrial port on 6th June 2020. The respondent says that the police arrived and surrounded the people in attendance. During the police intervention, the officers informed every person without temporary documents that they would be taken to the police station and issued a “khartia” (a short term document regularizing their stay) until they can submit an asylum application. The **asylum service in Greece** is not registering new asylum applications at this moment. The Skype service is also unavailable, meaning that asylum seekers cannot arrange an appointment to register their asylum application.

After being apprehended, the respondent describes how he was taken to a police station and held for one to two hours in the courtyard, sitting on the ground. In this time his belongings were taken, including his phone, 15 euros, his jackets and other items. His shoelaces, trousers and belt were also taken. At the police station were 20 others taken from the food distribution, as well as an additional 15 people who had been detained prior. The people came from a variety of places, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco and Algeria.

The respondent describes how a blue bus arrived, *“the prison bus”*, and 35 people were pushed and kicked to enter the bus with excessive force by the officers in the courtyard area. The bus left Thessaloniki and drove for approximately four hours.

The bus proceeded to transport the people to a place he calls the “*caserne*” – translated into barracks – where the 35 people were detained for half an hour. He describes how at this location there was a different unit of officers present, wearing dark blue uniforms. He cannot describe them fully because he did not look up from the ground in the position they had to assume.

Half an hour later, they were taken to the river Evros which borders Turkey. The 35 people were divided up by Greek authorities and crossed via boat in groups of 5-6 to the Turkish side of the river. An officer wearing a balaclava was driving the boat, taking people in groups to the other side of the border. The respondent says five Greek authorities were present at the border during the pushback and that they hit the group with batons and with hands, and kicked them as well before loading them into the boat.

The pushback occurred at night at approximately 01:00 on 6th June 2020. The people were removed across the border in the vicinity of Ipsala (TUR) where they then sought help from locals. Summarising his feeling in the period after the pushback, the respondent states he was shocked. He adds:

*“15 days [to arrive to Thessaloniki] and they take us to Turkey in five hours”*

The respondent gave his testimony in English, from Istanbul. He reached Istanbul the following day after his pushback, driven by a Turkish national who agreed to assist the group in exchange for cash. The two young men did not have money on them since all their belongings were taken by Greek officers, so they decided to run away once they arrived in Istanbul. They spent two nights sleeping on the streets and had only biscuits to eat.

**05/06/2020**

**“[THEY TOLD US] WE DON’T CARE...DIE... WE WANT YOU TO DIE”**

**Date and time:** June 5, 2020 10:00

**Location:** Aegean Sea, Lesvos-Turkey

**Coordinates:** 39.42442846288276, 26.363677503974447

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 21 person(s), age: 2-47 years old , from: Afghanistan, Iran

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, engine destroyed or removed, creation of waves, holes cut into the dinghy

**Police involved:** unknown number of Greek Coastguard (HCG), five Greek male officers in masks, grey shirts and camouflage pants; unknown number of Turkish Coastguard (TCG)

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

Reported by: josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

At 02:30 on 5th June 2020, the transit group left their location in Turkey, walked to the shore and boarded a boat at approximately 05:00.

After 20 minutes (still in Turkish waters) when the transit group was 500 meters away from Greek waters, they were approached by one large and one small Greek Coastguard (HCG) ship. The HCG created waves in an attempt to push the transit group from Greek territory into Turkish waters. The small boat approached the transit group's dinghy. There were five men on board wearing black masks, grey shirts and camouflage pants. The respondent alleged one was driving; one kept an eye out for the Turkish Coastguard (TCG); and two had long sticks. They used the sticks to beat and threaten everyone in order to prevent the transit group from stopping the third man, who had a knife and used it to cut a hole in their dinghy and fuel hose. When the TCG approached, the HCG left. The respondent alleged their dinghy was slowly sinking and that the transit group used their shoes and water bottles to scoop the water out.

A few hours later when the light was better, the respondent went live on Facebook and posted three or four videos of their situation. Some group members jumped into the water and helped to push the boat towards Greek waters. The respondent alleged that the HCG was observing the situation with one large ship and several smaller boats, and drove between their dinghy and the TCG to prevent the TCG from taking footage.

After this, the TCG left and the small boat with the same five men from before came back; one got into the transit groups' dinghy and told the respondent to give him his phone. The man attacked the respondent with a stick and searched his pockets, but the respondent had given the phone to someone else on the boat to hide it. The respondent alleged the man beat him so badly that he was about to jump into the water; in response the man said "*don't do it*" and stopped the attack. The officers then dragged the transit groups' dinghy back into Turkish waters. The group pleaded with them to let them go, said that they have kids and they will die. One of the officers replied by saying,

***"We don't care...die...we want you to die"***

Once back in Turkish waters, the attackers let go of the dinghy; it was sinking and there were strong waves made from both the HCG ship and the weather. At approximately 10:00 on 15th June 2020, the TCG took the transit group onto their ship after a Turkish-speaking member of the group begged them to. On board, the TCG gave the transit group masks and water and left the dinghy abandoned at sea.

Back on land, Turkish police took the transit group to a camp in Ayvacik and gave them some water. The camp manager told them that they would have to pay money if they wanted to leave the camp and that they could only leave to go to Bursa. The respondent alleged that usually the bus ticket for that trip would be 70TL, however the authorities wanted 200TL per

person; they advised that if the transit group did not pay, they would start deportation procedures and threatened,

***“as soon as there are planes again, you will be on them”***

The respondent and the transit group had money sent to them and gave it to the camp manager and police to pay for their journey to Bursa. Authorities then took them to the bus stop in Ayvacik and put them on a bus to Bursa; they paid 3500 Lira in total.

**03/06/2020**

## **“THEY ARE READY TO PUSH US BACK AND BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN”**

**Date and time:** June 3, 2020 02:00

**Location:** Lesvos, Greece

**Coordinates:** 39.386211790672405, 26.432889184765635

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 32 person(s), age: 2-50 years old , from: Afghanistan, Syria, DR Congo

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, reckless driving, engine destroyed or removed, waves created to push dinghy back

**Police involved:** HCG in navy blue uniform, masked men dressed in black and camouflage uniform on RHIB and Panther boats

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, personal information taken, no translator present

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

**Reported by:** josoor

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent, a 17 year old male from Afghanistan, was apart of a transit group instructed to spend two nights in the forest, somewhere between Izmir and Çanakkale in Turkey. On the night of 2nd of June 2020, smugglers told the transit group to walk to the shore which took roughly two hours. At 20:00 they arrived at the shore where five or six Turkish people were preparing a dinghy, the group were made to carry it into the sea. At 21:15, the transit group boarded the boat and left the Turkish coast.

At approximately 02:00, after five hours at sea, the Greek Coast Guard (HCG) detected the transit group, who were allegedly five minutes off the coast of Lesvos. The respondent alleged he saw a large boat but was blinded by a strong spotlight so he could not make out any descriptive details. A smaller boat approached the transit group and destroyed and removed

the engine of the dinghy. With a hook on a stick (like a spear), the transit group were beaten by authorities; one group member was injured during the attack, with several cuts on his head and face. The HCG then attached a rope to the dinghy and towed it towards Turkish waters.

The respondent alleges that the Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) tried to intercept the pushback and described it as if the TCG and HCG

### ***“were creating waves trying to drown each other”***

The TCG cut the rope between the HCG and their dinghy, after which the HCG withdrew from the situation. The TCG asked the transit group which countries they were from and where the HCG had picked them up. After answering these questions, the TCG left the transit group in their dinghy in the sea; they spent the rest of this first night and the next morning alone at sea.

On 3rd June 2020 around 12:00-13:00, another boat with three people approached the transit group and advised that they would help, and take them to a camp if they threw their life-vests and rubber rings away. Some group members complied, however others did not, so one of three individuals entered their dinghy and threw all of their rubber rings and life-vests into the sea. The man who entered their dinghy was wearing a mask and dressed in all black; the other two were wearing navy blue uniforms. They attached a rope to the dinghy and told the transit group that they would be taken to a Greek camp, but started towing the dinghy towards Turkey. The TCG intercepted the situation like the night before and created waves until the Greek boat drove away; again, afterwards, the TCG left the transit group out in the ocean alone, however this time, water was entering their dinghy. The respondent alleges that the transit group could see Lesvos but not Turkey, so they decided to try and paddle towards the island.

Throughout their journey, the respondent alleges members of the transit group were calling 112 and the HCG as instructed; the TCG advised the transit group that they were in Greek waters and were unable to intervene. During this time, members of the group became desperate and emotional. One member was a woman with a small baby, who was unconscious on board for a few hours.

The respondent alleges that the HCG was constantly watching the transit group and created waves to block them from reaching the island. The respondent texted his friend in Turkey, saying that if he did not hear from him again, he should call his siblings to tell them he had died so they would not wonder where he was. The respondent alleged he was trying to organise help for the transit group, so he felt that he could not show his emotions as the other members were relying on him; he did not want them to see that he was crying too, so he turned his face towards the water, pretending to paddle, when in reality he was crying.

On 4th June 2020, from 05:00, the respondent alleges he attempted to contact the UNHCR numerous times but was unsuccessful. After this, he streamed the situation live on Facebook and requested access to two groups for support. Two-three hours later he was accepted to the Information Point for Lesvos Group where he posted his videos from their situation and went live with a new video.

In one of the videos, the respondent describes and films one large and two smaller vessels of the HCG as they created waves to push the dinghy back to Turkish water. The respondent can be heard saying,

***“another boat is coming also, and it will push again. And a third one is behind them. You can see clearly. And they are ready to push us back and back again and again. We were just near there and they are pushing us back, back and back towards Turkey. This is not fair”***

At 11:00 a German vessel approached their dinghy and immediately told the transit group,

***“don’t worry we are from Germany and we will help you”***

The respondent described everyone on the dinghy crying in relief. One officer asked the group where they wished to go; the respondent said somewhere safe and happy. The officers gave the transit group water and chocolate, and asked if they wanted to go to Turkey or Greece; the respondent told them to Greece, as they were closer and had just spent 38 hours at sea after leaving Turkey. After five minutes of talking on a radio, the officer told the group that their videos had been seen –

***“don’t worry, be patient, you are safe”***

The German boats towed the dinghy towards shore, with a second German boat trailing behind (as shown in image below).

On shore, an old woman and some men who had been swimming, came to meet the transit group. They had a camera and gave the transit group water. Some of the group members were scared and ran away, however the swimmers were from an NGO which had been helping refugees for 40 years.

One hour later, police arrived and told the transit group to clean their mess up; so they collected the trash from their journey (including rubbish and their dinghy) and threw it away. The police made them walk for one hour to a spot where they reunited them with those who had run away earlier. Together the transit group walked another 30 minutes to a spot, where police told them they would stay for the next few days. The respondent alleges it was in the middle of nowhere.

A man waiting at the spot advised he was from the United Nations (UN), and asked the transit group for their personal information (names, age, nationality). The respondent alleges this man called the Afghani's Taliban; the respondent said maybe he was trying to joke, but it wasn't funny. The man gave the transit group food and sleeping bags, but told the group he would punish them if asked again, after a group member requested cigarettes. The police remained at the spot with the man and watched the transit group in shifts.

On 5th June 2020, five officials approached the transit group and tested all members for COVID19. The UN representative also came back twice to give them food, however on the second time, the respondent alleges the police took the food for themselves.

On 6th June 2020 at 22:00, police officers arrived and took the transit group in multiple vehicles – seven in a police car (including the respondent) and the rest on a bus. The respondent described the car as one that is made for arrests – no windows and just a small hole for air. The officers did not tell the group anything except repetition of the same message,

***“you will be deported”***

The respondent alleges the vehicles arrived at a camp and were welcomed by others. Some individuals claimed they had been there for more than a month. The respondent alleges that there were roughly 250 people at the camp, with no shower or electricity, and no where near enough tents.

**25/05/2020**

**“THEY DID NOT ONLY DENY US WATER, THEY ALSO THREW AWAY THE LITTLE FOOD WE HAD”**

**Date and time:** May 25, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Nea Vyssa, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.5863678, 26.5428404

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 9 person(s), age: 12-52 years old , from: Syria, Kasmir

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** unknown number of Greek police officers in uniform; unknown number of other officers dressed in black with masks

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** josoor

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On 15th May 2020, a transit group of 11 people crossed the Evros River from Edirne (TR) into Greece. After watching a group of approximately 70 people on the move get pushed back the night before from Greece to Turkey, the transit group decided to walk to another location where they successfully crossed the border.

They slept for one night and then walked for ten days; by the ninth day (29th May 2020) they were very hungry, so two group members decided to enter a village to buy food. They never returned, and after waiting many hours, the group decided to continue walking. When they reached the next village, again two members entered town to buy food, but were caught and beaten by police until they gave up the location of the others. Police arrived, arrested the transit group and violently beat them.

The transit group were taken to a police station where they stayed from the morning of 29th May 2020 until 20:00. The respondent alleges that at the police station, the officers took everyone's belongings (including money, bags, documents, food and water), stripped the men totally naked and beat them in a degrading manner. They were then put in cells with women and families who were caught somewhere else, in order to humiliate the transit groups (according to the respondent). The police did not offer the transit group food, water, or access to a toilet, and they also threw away the food and water they had bought from the village.

Afterwards, the transit group were transferred to another police station for 30 minutes. At approximately 20:30 (29th May 2020), they were taken to the GR-TR border where they were pushed back to the Turkish side across the Evros River. The transit group were handed over to authorities who the respondent described as men wearing dark uniforms with black masks; he alleges they were "Commandos." These 'Commandos' pushed the transit group back across the river with rubber boats and beat and kicked them until they reached Turkey.

The respondent alleged that he recognised one of the officers involved in the push-back as someone who tortured him when he went to a police station to try to report that his documents, passport, and residence papers from Austria were stolen from him during his visit to Greece in 2016.

From here, the transit group walked to the closest village (the respondent alleged it was close to Edirne). They walked until spotted by police, who took them to the bus station in order to get to Istanbul. At the bus station, the transit group could not find help from anyone to take them to Istanbul because they did not have any money with them, so the police took them to

a gas station nearby and told them to try to find help there. The next morning (30th May 2020) a man with a van agreed to drive the transit group to Istanbul in return for €100.00 per person upon arrival.

**16/05/2020**

## **“100+ DETAINED WITHOUT FOOD FOR MULTIPLE DAYS BEFORE PUSHBACK TO TURKEY”**

**Date and time:** May 16, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Ladochori, Greece

**Coordinates:** 39.489598356872534, 20.261736604062424

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 120 person(s), age: 16-30 years old , from: Afghanistan, Kurdistan (Iraq)

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings, destruction of papers

**Police involved:** 8 greek police officers during arrest (some in Greek police uniform); police bus (with cells); at least 7 officers in detention camp (Greek police uniform); large army van; 5 to 6 m long boat

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** josoor

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent in this case is a 24 year old male from Afghanistan. It was his second push-back from Greece within that last year. He was documented by the Greek Asylum Office and the UNHCR and also had an appointment in order to receive his Greek “white card” (International Protection Applicant Card) for refugees on 7th August 2020.

On the evening of 15th May 2020 he was arrested together with another 14 people in the streets of Ladochori (harbor city of Igoumenitsa). At that time he was on a pedestrian walkway close to a street with his friends when they saw Greek police officers and understood, they were about to be arrested. They attempted to escape but were finally caught by officers coming from the opposite side. There were eight officers in the streets, some in uniform, some in civil clothing.

*“They don’t want you to have a phone, so you can call no-one to ask for help. [...] If you were trying to escape, they would take you to the side and beat you so much. [...]”*

Two minors of the ages around 13 or 14 years were allowed to leave. A group of 15 young men between 16 and 30 years of Afghan and Kurdish (Iraq) origin were arrested. Their phones were taken from them. Then the police handcuffed and escorted them to the police station which was within 8 or 9 minutes walking time from the spot of the arrest (most likely Astinomiko Tmima in Ladochori: <https://goo.gl/maps/TsFgszAkoTqYdah59>). Attempts to escape by people in the group were followed by beatings from the police.

*"Papers were torn apart and thrown in the paper bin. [...] When they arrest you they don't listen to you. They know you have the papers, they checked the papers. They don't allow you to ask for water. What would happen if you asked for asylum."*

At the police station, each of the group-members was searched thoroughly by two police officers. They had to take all clothes off (except for underwear), shoe-laces were taken out of their shoes and whatever they carried with them was taken away.

*"[...] at police station, we were beaten a lot. [...] If someone was trying to shout or scream or simply asking for something they were beating them [...] for example asking for toilet."*

They only got their clothes back afterwards. Then they were put into one cell together. Whenever someone raised their voice or simply asked for assistance (e.g. to go the toilet) the police would come and beat the person heavily. Out of fear they did not dare to claim their rights and status according to their papers.

The group was kept in the cell for one night. In the early morning of the next day (16th May 2020) at 06:30 they were put into a police bus. It had very dark cabins inside from which the respondent couldn't see the outside. Four people were put in each cell and the doors were locked. They drove for around 10 hours until they arrived at the "camp".

With "camp" the respondent referred to a "very dirty, nasty place" in the forest close to the river Evros. There was a building which had one floor only, and had a big hall. The group was put there after they had to take their clothes off again for a second search of all their belongings. In the hall there were more than 100 other people waiting. They had stayed there for one or two nights in some cases, others for almost an entire week, during which they didn't receive food, water or anything else.

*"whenever we were trying to look in another direction, they [the officers] were coming and beating"*

The officers at the place were "very violent and cruel". All detainees in the camp had to keep their heads down at all times. Otherwise they would be beaten with heavy batons. (This in combination with the short time the respondent spent in the "camp" are the reasons why he is not perfectly sure about the other group-members of the push-back, other authorities present, other buildings or the environment.)

The officers mostly had their faces covered with ski masks and wore uniforms which the respondent compared to those of the police that arrested him the other day ("Greek city police"). As he was not allowed to look up, he is only sure about 7 or 8 different officers being present.

*"In the camp, most of the police faces were covered, but one wasn't. He had a baton in his hand. He was beating every refugee when they were embarking them in the car."*

The images below depict some of the bruising conferred onto the body of one of the individuals during the pushback:

The group of 15 was "lucky" as they only were kept in the main hall for some minutes. Then the entire group of detained persons departed. They were put in a van. It was described as a big, old military vehicle of green color. About 120 people were forcefully loaded on the vehicle which was far beyond its capacity.

Then they drove for 40 to 50 minutes. The vehicle only had two small windows through which the respondent could see the forest, small villages and farming lands. They arrived at a place close to the river. The respondent remembered thousands of mosquitoes were flying around. 15 to 20 people at once were embarked into a 5 to 6 meter long boat and taken to the other/Turkish side.

The Turkish army, when finding them, gave some old jackets and other clothes to those who were insufficiently dressed during the cold weather in an obvious way.

*"[the soldier] told us that Turkey was under Quarantine or Lockdown and they couldn't take them to a camp or shelter. So they told them to go to wherever they wanted."*

The respondent stayed outside at the site close to the river for the night. The next day (17th May 2020) a josoor partner team got in in contact with them and provided them with food and goods. Then they started walking towards Istanbul. They walked about 150 km themselves. At three different occasions different cars drove them for some distance after stopping next to them on the motorway they were walking at.

**14/05/2020**

## **"PUSHED BACK WITH A BROKEN LEG FROM A HOSPITAL IN XANTHI"**

**Date and time:** May 14, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Xanthi hospital to Evros river

**Coordinates:** 41.101205974654945, 24.859105595593654

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: 6 - 50 years old , from: Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Somalia, Eritrea

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** forcing to undress, hit by car driven by member of the public

**Police involved:** Greek police officers with car, multiple "commandos" (authorities in green uniforms with masks), large truck

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent re-entered Greece from Turkey on 26th April 2020 after being violently pushed back from Thessaloniki in the days before (**see report**). He is a man from Morocco, and traveled in a small transit group with other North Africans, attempting to return to Thessaloniki where he was staying prior to the first pushback.

The respondent traveled westwards with the group for several days. On 2nd May 2020, close to Xanthi on a stretch of B road near the motorway, the group were subject to a car crash by a Greek driver who swerved to hit them. The respondents legs were swiped in the incident, causing a severe break.

*"it wasn't like an accident like he tried to do that"*

The respondent stated his friends were close behind him, but were fortunately not hit by the car (though it seems the driver intended to hit all of them). The friends of the victim tried to help him, but it was a very severe injury, so they were forced to stop members of the public and ask someone to call the emergency services. Eventually a driver helped them to do this. They waited with the injured respondent, and then hid nearby, scared that they would be caught and pushed back if the police found them at the crash site.

The Greek police arrived but did not seem interested in investigating the attack or arresting the driver. They just simply called the ambulance to attend, which came after a little while and took the respondent to a hospital in Xanthi. The officers took the respondent's clothes, and he was dressed in hospital garments. The respondent described being treated well in the hospital and that one of the doctors could speak German with him, and was reassuring. He was operated for the injury and fitted with bolted metal splints in his lower right shin.

On 12th May 2020, the police arrived and took the respondent out of the hospital, despite him still having large sections of exposed metal bolted in the leg (and requiring follow up operations). The officers loaded him into a windowless vehicle and took him to what the respondent described as a "jail", where he was held for one and a half days.

The respondent described the detention space as having cells with around six person per room. He was alone in one room because of his injury, but he could here many others were being held

in the facility. On the second day he was removed by Greek authorities who took him to another detention space, which he termed “the commandos place” because it was run by masked men in green military uniform.

The respondent said this place was heavily guarded. The location was in remote farmland and he couldn't see many houses nearby. The respondent says that through the bars of the cell he was held in he could see the police come several times, and take approximately 30 people at a time in truck. The respondent saw around 80 people being held at this site, composed of multiple nationalities including Eritrea, Somalia, Syria and Palestine. There were also many children between 6-7 years old, and old people and he met at least two single women from Morocco.

The respondent described the setting of the second detention space as “horrible” and alleged it to be a big farmyard with stables for animals. He said he was held in one of these stables as a cell, alongside 50-60 other people. All were being held without shoes, and many had their clothes removed before arriving.

A truck came and loaded around 30 people, including the respondent and drove them to the Evros river. Because of his severe injuries, the respondent had to be carried to the car.

At the river he was unloaded and four people from the pushback group helped him, holding his legs and arms, and placed him in the boat. He crossed with these four people to the Turkish side

Describing this incident in comparison with the pushback he had suffered a week earlier, the respondent said:

*“the same commandos, the same tactic, the same plan, the same guns, just different place where they crossed”*

After two days of sleeping in the forest on the Turkish side the respondent along with others met people who had been pushed back from Paranesti Drama Pre-removals Centre. While the Turkish police passed by and refused to help them, they managed to get a local to drive them to Istanbul (though they were charged 500 euros).

At the time of interview, the respondent remained essentially bedridden, unable to walk. He stayed with friends in rented accommodation and was forced to carry out his own wound dressings with the help of others who collected bandages and iodine for him from the pharmacy.

**07/05/2020**

## **“MULTIPLE GROUPS PUSHED-BACK ACROSS THE EVROS RIVER FROM GREECE TO TURKEY”**

**Date and time:** May 7, 2020 13:00

**Location:** Evros river, Greece, near Uzunkopru, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.323436794272, 26.576615386516

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 19-65 years old , from: Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 4 Greek police officers, 12 Greek special forces in black uniforms with Greek flags and balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Wave - Thessaloniki, Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 30-year-old man from Morocco, walked for 17 days from Edirne, Turkey, towards Thessaloniki, together with 3 other people from Algeria ages between 20 and 30. On 7th of May, 2020, they stopped in a village near Kavala, Greece in order to buy some food. They had been without food for the previous two days, and they were fasting as it was the Ramadan month. Around this time, four Greek authorities, all male, arrived in two unmarked white vans, accompanied by some villagers in 3 cars. The respondent assumed that a villager must have called the police. The officers immediately became violent with the group-members, striking them several times. After this, the officers used zip-ties to bind their hands, pushed them to the ground, and forbid them from looking up. The police continued to beat them with closed fists and to kick them. Then they pushed them into one of the white vans, which had no windows, and took them to the village police station.

At the police station, the police took away all their belongings – bags, food, mobile phones, and money. They forced everyone to undress in order to search them and their clothes. According to the respondent, the police were continuously beating them with plastic sticks and insulting them, so they were afraid to express the intention to apply for asylum. The respondent was injured on his back and hands from the beating, but the injuries were not visible anymore at the time of the interview.

The police did not take any information or fingerprints from them and forbid them from speaking. They were put in a room with two other men from Syria and Egypt respectively. The migrants told the police that they were fasting and were very thirsty and hungry in the evening, when it was the time to break the fast. However, the police did not give them any food or water. They had to drink the water from the toilet in the cell.

After spending the night at the police station, at 11 am the group of 6 was put into a large blue bus matching the description of the vehicles used by the Greek riot police. They were told that they would be taken to the Drama detention center, but they were taken to a camp near the border with Turkey. It took 2 and a half to 3 hours to drive from the police station. None of their belongings were returned to them, only the clothes they were wearing, and their shoe laces were taken from their shoes. There were around 80 other people in the camp, including old men.

At around 1:00 pm, the officers in black uniforms with Greek flags on their upper arms, wearing balaclavas, took a small group, including the respondent and his group. At the site where they brought them, there were 12 officers and some military personnel standing further away. The officers ordered everyone to be quiet and beat anyone who made a sound with metal batons. They put people on a boat. The boat was operated by 3 persons, possibly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, who brought them across the river in groups of 5, driving back and forth.

After the river-crossing, the migrants formed two groups. The respondent was in a group of 25. There was another river branch, which they needed to cross by themselves, so they were soaked in water. The Turkish army spotted them and ordered them to stop, but they started running, because they were afraid of being caught and taken to a detention camp. The respondent told us that one of his friends was being detained in Turkey. During the flight, the group dispersed and the respondent remained together with 3 other people.

They continued walking through the forest until they reached a small village. They were approached by a policeman who offered them to arrange a driver that would take them to Istanbul for 100 euro from each person. Around 5 hours later, the driver arrived and took them to Istanbul. The respondent returned to Thessaloniki on 28th of September, after he had gathered enough money for the trip.

06/05/2020

## “THE POLICE COME TO THE CAMP, PICK UP PEOPLE AND DEPORT THEM”

**Date and time:** May 6, 2020 00:00

**Location:** near Ipsala, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 40.92923200000001, 26.393941

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 70 person(s), age: Various, including minors , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** no violence used, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Unknown number, Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent affected by this pushback was living in Diavata camp, close to Thessaloniki. He had a constant presence at the food distribution place in Thessaloniki where assistance was provided to transit groups on the street. Often, he would interpret for his fellow Urdu speakers because his language skills were good and he would facilitate the flow of information between

the English-speaking volunteers and the Urdu-speaking people in need of medical help or practical aid.

The respondent had a *khartia* – the police note issued to people who had entered irregularly until they can access the Asylum Service – valid until March 20, 2020. The Greek Asylum Service shut down all activities on 13th March 2020, and before that, the Government had announced that starting March 2020 all arrivals are prevented from submitting an asylum application. The measure was eventually lifted at the beginning of April.

When the lockdown measures were implemented, the respondent was living in the overspill area surrounding Diavata camp. He kept in contact with volunteers requesting information about the suspension of the asylum procedure, regarding the renewal of his *khartia*, and general information regarding the restrictive measures during the Corona outbreak. At the end of March, cold rains hit Thessaloniki and he sent around a video of the state of Diavata camp, of persons having to live in tents where they are neither warm, nor protected.

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/wp-content/uploads/Trimmed-video-1.mp4>

He describes the conditions while he is filming, shivering and laughing ironically, and he adds:

***“Many people think that we are in Europe living the luxury... enjoying the luxury life of Europe, but the situation is different, totally different.”***

On 26th April 2020, the respondent got in contact again and reported that every one or two days, *“the police come to the camp, pick up people and deport them”*. He added that the police were beating the persons as well. He asked for clarifications about the situation as well as for help from the NGOs to prevent these seemingly unlawful arrests. He wanted to help out himself by providing information that 29 people had been *“deported”* in the last 6 days, at the time, and he forwarded the social medial profiles of persons he alleged had been *“deported”*. He could not forward their phone numbers because everyone had their phone taken during the operation by the perpetrating officers.

On 28th April 2020, the respondent reached out again and he explained that the police had raided the surrounding area of Diavata camp and taken many people in vans. He explained that everyone would certainly be sent back to Turkey. In the days following the raids, the respondent and many others did not return to their tents out of fear that they would be taken. None of the persons previously taken had returned.

Despite his precautions to sleep in the fields farther from the camp, on May 5th, at 15:30, he tried to reach out and sent a short message saying:

***“police caught us i don’t know what going do with us/  
please on your data”***

Two days later, he messaged again: he was in Istanbul. The respondent would describe at a later date, when it became possible to interview him, that he was stopped outside the camp by the police while trying to reach the bus station to take a bus into Thessaloniki. The police asked for

his documents and he showed his expired *khartia*. The respondent explained that indeed his police note is expired but that the Asylum Office has been closed because of the quarantine. He describes that then they put him in the same white van former respondents described and that he was taken to a police station where he spent the night. The following day, he was driven to the border and pushed back to Turkey.

The respondent tells how he was moved from police station to police station and subsequently loaded into a bus, 32 people in total. Asked as to how he is so sure of the number of people, he explains that the bus is separated into 8 contained spaces with 4 people capacity for each, and that makes 32 in total. He said that among the persons there were Afghans, Pakistanis and Arabs, including four underage minors from Afghanistan. He cannot be more precise with the information because *the "situation was stressful"*, in his own words. The bus brought them close to the border, to a detention place where they spent an additional 4 or 5 hours, and where a larger number of people were waiting. Among the group, more nationalities were represented including two Syrian women.

When the night fell, everyone was loaded into two big metal vans, 35 people in one and 35 in the other. They were driven for a half an hour to arrive at the river bank where the boats were waiting for them. They were loaded in the boat in numbers of 9 or 10 while 2 armed men were driving the boat on the other side. He explains that they were police officers who looked like border police, but that he could not observe more details because it was night time and because he kept his head down in order not to be hit by the Greek authorities. Also, the perpetrators involved in the pushbacks were all wearing a mask, a balaclava.

On 12th May 2020, the respondent was eventually available to be interviewed. He cannot be reached easily because his phone was taken and he has to use his friend's phone. He describes the experience with a sense of irony. He states he will try to cross back into Greece at a certain point. He adds that he did try to go to the Asylum Office in Thessaloniki one day before the quarantine and they turned him away telling him that the Office will be closed starting the following day. His will to apply for asylum was never recorded.

**03/05/2020**

## **"A NEW PRACTICE IN NORTHERN GREECE - FROM IGUMENITSA TO TURKEY"**

**Date and time:** May 3, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Feres

**Coordinates:** 40.742790221978034, 26.041011630939707

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 60 person(s), age: Respondent: 23 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, electric shock, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Igumenitsa: 5 officers in plain clothes plus the captain; 2 police officers driving the van; 3 officer in border uniform; 6 officers in army officers

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** No Name Kitchen

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is an asylum seeker in Greece who arrived to the country towards the end of 2019. He asked for asylum in Filakio; he also states that he spent several months in Drama centre.

On the 3rd of May at approximately 00:00 midnight, the respondent, along with two other people, were going to buy some food in a 24 hour grocery shop in Igoumenitsa. Within the group, there was a man who had been waiting for official papers in Greece for just 20 days. They were celebrating Ramadan. People-on-the-move staying in the city often live in a forest which is colloquially referred to as the "jungle". It is a bit outside the city centre, but near to the main gate of the Port (see picture). When the men came to the inner-city area for their errand, they were stopped by "private security". The transit group could not see them well because they were in a car with black windows. According to the respondent, the "private security" wore civilian clothing: one of them was in red jacket, blue pants and wearing a cap. They said: "Come with us" and detained the group. When the respondent asked where they were taking them, the "security guy" answered that they would send them to Athens. They were then brought to a building which the respondents described as "commando house". At this building, there were an additional 14 people who had been arrested within the city that evening.

The group were detained for one or two hours later, a vehicle arrived to the building. The respondent described it as follows:

*"Like a bus, blue color, a jail car, with separate cells which you cannot run away from. When you are inside, you cannot see outside"*

*"Door is lock, door is lock, door is lock" (see drawing).*

The group were put in the van, two police officers were driving, and were then driven for around 10 hours.

According to the respondent, the bus transported them all the way back to the border with Turkey, but they were still on the Greek side (see map). When they were told to exit the vehicle, three Greek police officers were outside: two male and one female, wearing border police uniforms. The female officer had an electric taser and she was described as shocking the individuals of the group as they exited the van. The other officers physically hit the group as they left the vehicle. Afterwards, they "put them in jail" near the border for between 5 and 6 hours.

Next, an officer wearing an army uniform arrived to their cell and asked the group for their money; he also broke their phones and started to "hit too much". The respondent further described that they were ordered to give over much of their clothing and some people had their papers torn up.

*“There is a room like commando where they wear black mask” (balaclavas). There, they took the clothes even the shoes, just having the shorts, they hit again.”*

Afterwards they were brought to a “container like those of trailer” on foot (see drawing). There were around 60 other people, among them were Afghan, Pakistani, and Syrian nationals. The respondent recalled that they were “close to die because the lack of oxygen, you know, container is locked”.

Eventually, they were all brought out of this container and were brought even closer to the border, next to the Evros river. At this point 6 officers clad in army-like fatigues beat them with batons.

*“Break hands, break legs, hit too much”.*

Close to the river, they put them “in plastic boats”; around 30 – 35 people in each boat. The respondent described them as “commando boats.”

*“Commando boat, they have them in the border”.*

During this time, the respondent recalled that the Greek authorities were looking around to make sure that there were no witnesses to the events, such as Turkish border police. They sent the boat across the river to Turkish territory, towards the other side of the Evros river, with the help of what the respondent described as a non-Greek person.

*“There is a place, forest, we put out in the wood. The weather was warm, too much mosquito”*

In Turkey, the group became fractured and the respondent walked almost a half a day to reach a small city in Turkey, without shoes and clothes. They only had on their t-shirts and underwear and were afraid that they would be arrested again.

*“We walked, walked, walked, we were in shock.”*

The respondent recalled that they continued walking and at one point entered a forested area.

Several Turkish police officers found the respondent and his companions and they brought them to place which was described as “when people [get] pushed back, [they] bring here”. The location of this camp remains undetermined. At the time of the interview, the respondent and the group are still in Turkey.

28/04/2020

## “IN TEN MINUTES THEY TOOK ALL PEOPLE TO TURKEY”

**Date and time:** April 28, 2020 22:00

**Location:** Evros border

**Coordinates:** 40.699936345819665, 22.85918023809816

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 30 person(s), age: Respondent: 19 years old , from: Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

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

**Police involved:** Greek border guards, green uniform

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** personal information taken, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent states that he was picked up by the police, early in the morning from his tent in Diavata camp, on Tuesday, 28 April, 2020. He was 19 years of age and he had set up a tent in the minor's section, while, like many others, he was not registered in the camp. He was in possession of a valid “khartia” (informal term referring to the police note) when the police had taken him. His “khartia” is still valid at the moment of publication of this report.

The respondent tells how he was woken up by the police, picked up from his tent and shoved into a van together with ten other persons from the camp. He told the policemen, in the basic Greek he learnt, that he does not want to be deported. They reassured him that they will only issue him a new document. After a short ride, he arrived at a police station.

***They didn't take us inside, just outside, and they took our stuff and then they transferred us.***

In the yard of the station, there were around 30 people who had been picked up from the camp. The policemen proceeded to performing body searches and confiscated all their belongings: phones, money, shoelaces, belts, and others. He states that the policemen were cruel and were hitting people. Ten minutes later, everyone was loaded into a bigger bus. The bus he describes was compartmentalized into different locked sections.

The bus drove for about three hours and a half the respondent estimates, but says he cannot know since he did not have his phone. They arrived at the destination and were told to wait in the bus. They were not allowed bathroom breaks. The group were unloaded from the bus and

taken to the river bank. They were hit again while they were being loaded in boats. Asked if the policemen were hitting them for not obeying orders, he answers that they were hitting them randomly and that they hit him so many times over the hands that he sustained injuries to his wrist (pictured).

They were ferried to the other side of the Evros river in smaller groups in three boats, arriving into Turkey within one day of being picked up in Diavata. Describing the episode at the border the respondent stated:

***“In ten minutes they took all people to Turkey. If I knew they were going to deport me, I would have killed myself.”***

**27/04/2020**

## **“I THOUGHT I COULD FIND FREEDOM HERE...”**

**Date and time:** April 27, 2020 21:30

**Location:** Lavara, Evros

**Coordinates:** 41.266667, 26.383333

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 11 person(s), age: 36 , from: Iraq, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, electric shock, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 6-7 Greek officers, 3 white pickup trucks, one officer in dark uniform with EU and Greek flag on the shoulder

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent, a 36 year old teacher from Iraqi Kurdistan, had been living in Athens, Greece for two years with his wife and children, applying for asylum in 2018. Having been issued a asylum seeker's card (known as an 'Ausweis') in October 2019, valid until March 2020, he was waiting for the outcome of his final interview, reportedly delayed because of the Covid-19 lockdown. He had recently been offered a job in construction works in a town in the Evros region. The respondent was not able to identify the actual name of his destination, possibly the town of Didymoteicho. The respondent went from Athens to Thessaloniki, and took a bus from there.

On April 27th, at around 19:30, the bus he was travelling on was stopped by the Greek police for a control, shortly past the town of Lavara. He and a dozen more passengers were asked to get off the bus and, once on the street, the police ordered the bus driver to leave. After having checked their documents, the police left them on the road. The respondent separated from the group and reached the nearby town of Lavara on foot, where he found the bus station, thanks to the directions given by locals.

After waiting in front of the station, at around 21:00 the respondent stopped a passing by car to ask for information about the bus schedule. In the car, a white Toyota pickup, were three men who claimed to be police officers. One of them was in black clothes, the other two were wearing clothes branded with the police logo. The respondent was ordered to present his documents, and specifically his asylum seeker's card, to which he complied.

The respondent saw one of the men making a call, after which the men kept him waiting for a time. After around 15 minutes, the men got of the car and told him to sit down. The respondent didn't comply with the order and turned around, One of the men assaulted him from behind and pushed him to the ground, kicking him with his boots and insulting him in Greek. Then, he recalled one of them producing a metal stick (what the respondent assumed was a pipe) from the car, with which he started beating the respondent, on his back, his ribs and on his shoulder.

After the beating, the respondent was kept on the ground by one of the men pointing a gun on him. His phone was taken and put under one of the tyres of the car, destroyed in the process. He remembers seeing the man he had given his asylum seeker's card walking away from the spot and coming back a few minutes later with his hands empty. At that point, a second pickup with two men in dark clothes approached them. The respondent was first handcuffed, then forced to get onto the second car, and then driven away for about 1 hour and a half.

After driving on a road in the forest, they reached a building that the respondent referred to as a "police station". He was made to enter the building and go into one of the many rooms, where he was forcibly undressed and left in his underclothes. The respondent recalls the room having small windows, placed high up on the wall and close to the roof, and a squat toilet. The walls of the room were white, was were the interiors of the whole building. At this point, one of the men who had stopped him came into the room and returned him part of his belongings, including his money, and asked whether it was true that the respondent had been living in Athens, to which he replied that it was true.

*"If it's correct, then we will send you back to Athens"*, said the policemen, according to the respondent. After this, he was left to sleep on a dirty mattress for the rest of the night. The morning after, around 10 am or 11 am, he was handcuffed again, removed from his room and put inside another similar room with other people. They were around 10, of which the respondent can recall there were six Moroccans, one Tunisian and one Iraqi Kurdish. The respondent claims that all of them had been caught by the border police after attempting to cross the Greek-Turkish frontier on the river Evros.

After a while, a masked man—who was wearing black clothes with Greek writing and an EU flag and a Greek flag on the shoulder—entered the room followed by the police officers, asking questions about the detainees' accounts. Reportedly, the police officer with whom the respondent had been speaking the previous night, answered: *"These people came from Turkey, except for this guy, he has family in Athens and he's registered here so we will send him back to Athens"*. To that, the masked man, which the respondent refers to as the "commander",

replied, yelling that all of them would have been taken to the river. The interviewee was shocked and surprised to understand that the “commander” outranked the police officer in hierarchy.

The respondent was then summoned out of the room and was made enter another room where the “commander” was waiting with three other masked men. There, he was beaten again with metal sticks as well as being shot multiple times with a stun gun/taser, before being forced to give all his remaining documents as well as his money. Next, he was placed back inside the room. He was able to talk again with the policeman in uniform with whom he had spoken, and asked for the whereabouts of his Ausweis, which had been confiscated the previous night, but the officer answered that he had never seen the document.

Later on, around 3 pm or 4 pm, all the detainees were brought to the entrance gate of the building and made to enter a large white car, reportedly a Sedan Car with 11 passenger seats. The four masked officers drove them for about an hour and a half before arriving at the River Evros, where the detainees were forced out of the car and beaten again with sticks and kicking. One of the men seriously injured the Iraqi Kurdish man, whose leg was possibly broken as a result of the beating.

The masked men then produced a 3-meter-long inflatable raft from the trunk of the car and ordered them to inflate it, enforcing the order with more beating and kicking. Once the raft was ready, they were all forced inside and ordered to keep their heads down. Nonetheless, the respondent managed to see two other men—both masked and armed with guns—approaching the “commander” and receiving from him an amount of money (reportedly 500€ or 600€).

After the transaction, the two men, whom the respondent refers to as the “smugglers”, got into the raft with the detainees and quickly drove them across the river. Upon reaching the opposite riverside, they were ordered to disembark. However, before everyone could get off the raft, three Turkish military officers arrived on the scene. While the respondent with other 4 or 5 Moroccans had already disembarked, the “smugglers” with the remaining passengers quickly attempted crossing the river backward.

On the Greek side of the river, they met resistance from the “commander” and his men, who engaged in an escalating altercation with one of the Turkish officers, shouting across the two sides of the Evros river. The respondent and the other men who had disembarked, decided to leave the place before they could witness the outcome of the fight. They asked one of the Turkish officers for directions to Istanbul and, after a quick walk into the woods, they reached an asphalted road.

They walked until late in the night, when a car stopped and the driver offered them a lift to Istanbul for 50\$ each. A Syrian man who was sitting in the passenger seat offered the respondent to lend him the money for the ride, which he accepted.

26/04/2020

## “THE OFFICERS ARRESTED HIM, PLACING HIM ON A BLUE BUS THAT WAS LIKE A PRISON”

**Date and time:** April 26, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Along the Erdine border, near Ipsala (TU)

**Coordinates:** 40.94444995759724, 26.357795586391052

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 36-50 person(s), age: 23-30 , from: Palestine, Syria, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** 15 Greek officers wearing black uniforms, 20 officers at the border wearing dark blue. 2 blue police buses, 1 boat

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, 29 years old and from Syria, was apprehended by Greek officers sometime between 7:00 am and 8:00 am on 26th April 2020, in Diavata camp. The respondent had woken up and wanted to go to the toilet when an unknown number of officers wearing black uniforms stopped him and asked to see his papers. The respondent did not have documentation so the officers arrested him, placing him on a blue bus that ‘was like a prison’ with around 20 other undocumented people (the bus described is likely one used by the Greek riot police). The officers drove the transit group for approximately 15 minutes to a place the respondent describes as looking like a camp, with very high walls. The respondent was unable to collect his belongings before being apprehended, so he left them in Diavata camp. This included his bag and €1,400 that he intended to use for the continuation of his journey.

At this ‘camp’, there were approximately 15 officers present. Some of these officers kicked the respondent in his stomach. They confiscated the respondent’s shoelaces, belt, and phone, failing to return them. The officers did not take the respondent’s fingerprint or photograph, nor did they provide the respondent with food or access to the toilet. The respondent believed he was held at this location for between 1-2 hours. The respondent was then placed on a large, blue bus with around 36-50 other individuals, between the ages of 23 and 30, and driven to the Greek border with Turkey, marked by the Evros river. The respondent indicated that of these individuals there was only one person from Palestine and the rest were from Morocco. There were two women in this group, but one had issues breathing and was released at the camp.

Upon arrival at the border, the respondent was met by around 20 officers wearing dark blue clothing (likely the Greek police), who proceeded to beat the transit group with batons, and to shout at them, before forcing the group to cross the river via boat. The respondent was beaten on his legs and knees, stating his injuries prevented him from walking properly afterward. The respondent described the boat as being plastic, with a motor, in which two officers without weapons drove, whilst the other officers present used binoculars.

The respondent described that they were pushed-back in the area of Ipsala (TU) and, once on Turkish land, decided to walk to Istanbul (TU) because he had no money. During this journey, the respondent evaded Turkish authorities to reduce his chances of being taken to a camp for quarantine, following the outbreak of COVID-19. The respondent also mentioned previously being pushed back on another occasion, from Komuniti (GRK) to Turkey.

**25/04/2020**

## “THEY WERE BEATING THEM WITH THE STICK WHEN THEY PASSED NEAR THEM YOU HEAR THE SOUND OF THE ELECTRIC GUN”

**Date and time:** April 25, 2020 00:19

**Location:** Evros delta

**Coordinates:** 40.64573047997234, 22.917981916896647

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 50 person(s), age: 15 - 42 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Sri Lanka

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek officers dressed in navy blue uniform, 1 white transit van, a blue coach with "police" written on the side, officers in green uniforms with masks, a large metal truck, three toyotas, and inflatable boat

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In this incident, 70 people were removed from Greece to Turkey across the Evros river. Two respondents were interviewed: a Moroccan man, who had arrived in Greece on 24th February 2020 and was issued a “khartia” (a temporary residency paper) two days latter, and another Moroccan man who had arrived in March but did not hold any documents in Greece. The two men were living in squats in Thessaloniki when they were seized by the police on 24th April 2020 alongside a large group of other people.

The first respondent (who had received a khartia in February) was stopped by Greek police officers close to the **Media Markt** shop on Νέα Δυτική Είσοδος Κωλέπτη, Thessaloniki 546 27. He was with a friend walking close to the shop and Greek police officers captured them both. The officers made them put their valuables (phones, money) in a plastic bag and then put the men in a car. Once put into the vehicle, the pair found that other friends they knew from the area where already detained inside.

The police drove away and proceeded to make a tour of the city collecting more people from the street. The respondent describes the use of a white Transit van and a regular patrol car to pick up 12 people in total. A similar process resulted in the pickup of the second respondent. He described being outside a cafe near the central train station (**Thessaloniki Train Station**) and a police car drawing up, and two officers exiting the vehicle. The officers, dressed in blue, asked him “do you have khartia” and then took him, along with a 19 year old from Pakistan, who was stood outside the same cafe.

Neither of the respondents knew where they were being taken. One describes being taken through three police stations. In the first station, at around 19:30, he had all his possessions removed by police (15 euros, a powerbank, a mobile phone, rings, a silver bracelet, an asthma inhaler). In the second station he was held for three hours with no information or processing. In the third station (where he arrived at around 23:00), the respondent spent one night and was made to sign some paperwork in Greek, as well as having his fingerprints taken. He was not given any food or water.

Both captured persons were transferred, along with others, in vehicles to a larger detention space around two hours away from Thessaloniki. One respondent reported that in this space, which was described as a “prison”, the Greek authorities removed more of their possessions. This time clothes and shoes were taken, leaving the men in only their trousers and shirts.

Inside the facility the officers didn’t let the detained persons speak or raise their heads. One respondent alleges a person received a broken hand after being struck violently by the police in the detention space. There were other people held in the detention space and the officers brought a large bus. The bus was blue with barred (partially covered) windows. Inside was 10 divided compartments which were used to hold small groups of people (this matches the description of vans used by the Greek riot police). 36-40 people were loaded into the van.

***“They collected them from other jails, the other people in the bus, as they collected them in the street, you are not allowed to look but I looked and I saw the rooms were full”***

The bus left the detention space in the morning on the 25th April 2020. It drove for around 3 to 4 hours. Inside were people from several countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. Most were aged between 20 and 40 years old. There was one woman from Iran aged around 42.

The respondents describe being unloaded at a site near the border with Turkey. It was reported that it was not a formal prison, but like an “isobox” with windows. They could not recall many features of the space because they were ordered to keep their heads down while waiting.

At this space, between 40 and 60 people (including women and minors) were already being held. The respondents recall seeing people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Sri Lanka and Morocco. It was reported that there were around seven unaccompanied minors aged around 15-16, and women in the detained group. Some people had injuries from the Greek authorities, the respondent said that the people followed the authorities’ orders because they thought the police would give them papers or move them to another place.

***“If someone don’t walk or don’t move or ask something they beat the person, you can see a lot of people with broken arm in the commandos area”***

The authorities were described as “commandos” or “cagoule” because of the military attire and face masks they were wearing. The respondents report being held a short time at this location until a larger dark metal truck was used to load between 50 and 70 detained persons inside. This occurred at about 18:30 on 25th April 2020. The people were taken by the Greek authorities to the Evros/Meric river. The drive time was approximately 40 minutes. The respondents describe passing divisions of the Greek military on the way who stopped and spoke to the drivers of the vehicle.

At the river, described as in the delta area between Ipsala and Uzunköprü, the group were unloaded by a further division of Greek authorities at around 19:00. Some of these officers were dressed in the same military uniform, while others were in civil clothes. The authorities apparently had at least one inflated boat and three Toyota vehicles with them.

***“commandos speaks all the languages, speak English, speak German, if you raise your eyes they will beat you, we were like animals, only look down and if you try to do anything they beat you”***

The respondent said the officers spoke in English with them, and when one of them asked for his friend for a lighter, the officer replied “sorry” in German. One respondent also suggested that some of the plain clothes officers could also speak Bulgarian.

Close to the river the group were made to wait on the floor, officers shouting:

***“sit down! sit down! shut up! sit down!”***

They were taken in groups of around 10 to the boat. The respondents recall being forced to approach the boat in a kneeling position, shuffling on their knees in an uncomfortable fashion.

The officers were carrying guns and batons. Some of them were also reportedly holding electric taser devices. One respondent recalls being threatened with the taser close to his ear as he was at the river bank.

***“they were beating them with the stick when they passed near them you hear the sound of the electric gun [taser], put it next to your ear, put it next to your head, because you are supposed to hold your head down”***

The respondents recall being loaded into the boats and then driven quietly across to Turkey. The drivers of the boats were described as Pakistanis or Afghans from the transit community. The boat docked on the Turkish side and the affected groups dispersed, looking for help from locals in the nearby villages. One respondent sought help at a local mosque where he received food, shoes and clothes.

Of approximately 50 persons pushed back, a small group of friends who had known each other in Thessaloniki recrossed into Greece on the afternoon of 25th April 2020. The group, composed of adults from Morocco and Algeria, traveled for 12 days in order to reach Thessaloniki. On the way however, close to Xanthi, one Moroccan man was the victim of a hit and run by a Greek driver who swerved to injure the group as they walked along a road that ran close to highway number 2. The driver, who allegedly had two children in the passenger seats, swiped the one mans legs, causing a severe break.

The driver then escaped without stopping. Frightened for their friend's well being, the rest of the transit group tried to stop multiple cars in order to alert the emergency services. Eventually one member of the public stopped and helped to call an ambulance. The friends waited with the injured man, but then concealed themselves in some nearby bushes when the ambulance arrived because it was accompanied by Greek police. The ambulance took the man away, escorted by police. At the time of interview, the transit group had no further information where their friend was or what his physical condition was like. The man was not contactable by phone and the group had no idea which hospital he had been taken to, only that he had been picked up by the ambulance in the area of Xanthi.

**23/04/2020**

## **“HE WAS COMING OUT OF THE SHOWER AT THE TIME AND THE POLICE SURPRISED HIM”**

**Date and time:** April 23, 2020 22:00

**Location:** Evros border

**Coordinates:** 40.7011416, 22.863616699999999

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 22 person(s), age: 16, 18, 22 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 15-20 Greek police officers

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, an Afghan national, arrived in Thessaloniki (GRK) two months and a half before he was illegally removed on April 23, 2020. He was living in Diavata camp. He was issued a “khartia” (temporary regularisation document) on 12th February 2020, which was valid for one month (until March 13, 2020). He was unable to submit an asylum application, considering that all asylum applications were suspended by the Greek government in March, and the Asylum Service was closed due to restrictions imposed during the Corona pandemic.

The respondent declared that on 23rd April 2020, around 12:00, the Greek police came to the camp and informed people that they would be issued a “khartia” or they could receive a new “khartia”, if the period of legal stay in the country had expired. The respondent agreed to accompany the policemen and be issued a new document. He describes that around 15 to 20 policemen were in the camp the day in question and rounded up multiple persons. The respondent recalls that he was coming out of the shower at the time and the police surprised him. He states that they picked up all the others from their tents and that everyone was forced to comply and go with the police.

Once he accepted to enter the van, he was repeatedly hit by the police. He recalls being taken to a police station in Thessaloniki and on the way another person was picked up by the van at the train station in Thessaloniki. In the police station, he and others were body searched, their phones and money confiscated. The respondent stated that among the persons in the group, there were asylum seekers in possession of an applicant card, which the policemen destroyed by tearing the document.

Afterwards, they were taken outside the station where a bus was waiting for them. The newly arrived policemen searched them once again, and then proceeded to load everyone in the bus. They took their jackets, leaving them in light clothing.

At night, they had already reached the border and they were being ferried to Turkey. There were around 22 persons pushed back, among them Afghan nationals, Pakistan nationals, and from Northern African countries. Among the Afghan nationals, there were 2 boys, one 18 years old, and the second, a minor of 16 years old. During the bus ride, one of the detainees asked to have a bathroom break but the policeman refused. When the person in question insisted, the policeman got up from his seat and hit the person in question as well as the others.

The Greek authorities placed the group in a boat and ferried them across the river. The respondent recalls it was around 20:00 or 21:00 of the same day he was taken from the camp. He recalls that the “*captain*” of the boat was working with the police and that he spoke various languages like Pashtoo, Arabic, and Farsi.

**23/04/2020**

**“THEY [ARE] USING PEOPLE FROM PAKISTAN TO CROSS US TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER”**

**Date and time:** April 23, 2020 20:00

**Location:** Greek-Turkish border, near Meriç.

**Coordinates:** 41.188483677348, 26.4226521875

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 16 - 20 person(s), age: 26 , from: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, pushing people to the ground, insulting, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 8 Greek police officers (Thessaloniki) and 30 Greek police officers (Drama & OPKE riot police)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent is 26 years old and Algerian. In 2018, he was deported from France to Algeria. That same year, he travelled to Turkey, and then to Thessaloniki, Greece, where he has lived since then. The respondent had submitted an asylum application in Greece and was in possession of a white card (International Protection Applicant's Card).

On the 2nd March 2020, at 13:00 the respondent was alone in a cafe opposite the Thessaloniki Railway Station. Two officers, who were not in uniform, entered the cafe and asked the respondent if they could "*check his papers.*" After presenting his white card – which the respondent stressed was valid and within its expiration date – he was handcuffed by the officers and taken outside of the building.

The respondent was made to wait on the street until a further six police officers arrived on white motorcycles. They wore blue uniforms so were likely the local Greek police. All together the eight officers walked the respondent to the Thessaloniki Police Station HQ. The journey lasted approximately 10 minutes.

Inside the station, the respondent was placed in a cell with three Algerian males of a similar age to his own. The respondent asked why he had been arrested, despite possessing a white card, and was slapped across the face and racially abused by one police officer. The cell was reportedly filthy and their only source of water was from the toilet. The respondent remained there for 10 days.

On the 12th of March, the respondent was placed on a "*big blue metal bus,*" along with 15 other men from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. This description of vehicle corresponds to the riot vans used by the Greek police.

They were driven for two hours to **Drama Paranesti Pre-Removal Centre**, in northeastern Greece. Upon their arrival, the respondent was searched by the officers, who confiscated his white card, mobile phone and 30 Euros. None of these items were returned. On the third day of the respondent's detention in the Camp, 30 police officers arrived from the city of Drama. All of the officers wore balaclavas; several were dressed in black clothes with "OPKE" (Greek riot

police) displayed on their uniforms. According to the respondent, the police started to “beat everyone in the camp.” However, he stated that he was singled out and subjected to a particularly severe beating by the officers. When the respondent fell to the ground, one of the officers stamped on his head and he lost consciousness.

*“One of them beat [me] by stick in [my] legs, and others kicked [me], [I] fell down directly,”*

The respondent woke up in a hospital. He believes he had been there for one day and that it was the local hospital of Drama. Shortly after he regained consciousness, two police officers entered the room, cuffed the respondent and escorted him to a police car. He was driven back to the detention centre.

Returning to the detention centre, the respondent became distressed as he felt that he had been detained and beaten “without reason.” He said that he “started making trouble” and complained of being mentally unwell. Over the next 45 days, the respondent states he was hospitalised five times from violent altercations with the officers in the facility.

On the first day of Ramadan [23rd April, 2020], the respondent – now fasting – was taken from the detention centre at 11:00. He and 15 – 20 others were placed on a bus, resembling that described above, and were driven to the Meriç River. The respondent did not know the exact location.

*“I don’t know the name of the place, I don’t know the position on maps, but I can go there now by myself, because [I] have crossed this place too many times”*

At the river, there was a large contingent of Greek police officers and soldiers, exceeding 15 in number. All were wearing balaclavas and the respondent reports seeing the riot vans of the Greek police. The respondent and the group he arrived with were ordered to be silent and marched into a concealed wooded area. Here they waited around five hours until it was dark.

The group was then moved to the riverside. A black dinghy arrived shortly after. It was manned by two men whom, the respondent alleges, were Pakistani. This assertion of the respondent is based on his observation that the men spoke Urdu.

The respondent observed extensive cooperation between the Greek forces and the suspected Pakistani dinghy drivers. Both parties communicated to each other in English. The respondent said:

*“they [the Greeks] were helping them [the Pakistanis] to find the good points to help us cross from the Greek side to the Turkish side ... because they were afraid of the Turkish army seeing them.”*

The respondent was loaded with nine others into a dingy and ferried across the Meriç River. In Turkey, he flagged down a civilian vehicle that transported him to the Turkish village of Meriç.

**23/04/2020**

## **“WATER? THEY DRINK WATER FROM THE TOILET.”**

**Date and time:** April 23, 2020 14:00

**Location:** Drama detention center, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.18745020276082, 26.3182820703125

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 23 person(s), age: 29-47 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, electric shock, water immersion, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 15 greek officers, one van

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

In January 2020, a 29 years old man from Algeria was stopped by the police in the city of Athens for documents' verification. The respondent had legal papers for remaining in Greece (he had been in the country for four years), however the authorities took his paperwork and brought him to a police station in Athens.

There he was detained for four months without legal process. The other prisoners (according to the respondent, many of which were from from Iraq, Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, and Afghanistan) were held together in a small cell, had access to only one meal per day and did not have regular access to water, so that they were drinking water from the toilet. At that time, the respondent described that he almost committed suicide, but was stopped by a police guard. After four months, he was brought to the Pre-Removal Detention Facility Amygdaleza, in Athens, where he stayed for six days.

After this, he was transferred to the the detention camp of Drama for another six days. On the first day of Ramadan (23rd of April) at around 2:00 pm, the police came, took 23 people from Morocco and Algeria aged between 29 and 47 years of age, and put them in a large blue van with no windows (likely the riot vans used by the Greek police). After three hours in transit, the group arrived at the Greek-Turkish border, near Meriç.

There, the respondent described that group was led out of the van. Five Greek police officers – three male and two female – started beating them with batons, tree branches, fists, kicks and electric tasers. They also stole their money, food, bags, clothes, and phones. Everyone in the group was forced to undress – they were totally naked. The respondent states that some of the

officers were wearing black clothes and others were wearing green uniforms; he inferred that this meant that some were from the police force and others from the army. He recalled that they were all speaking in the Greek language with each other.

After the beatings, the group was transferred over the Evros/Meric river into Turkey. This was carried out by a small dinghy driven by two men, probably from Pakistan, who put the persons' heads in the water to threaten them. Once they arrived on the Turkish side of the border, the group was helped by some Turkish people, who accompanied four people from the group with broken legs and hands immediately to the nearest hospital.

**23/04/2020**

## **"THEY TELL THEM, 'WE WILL LET YOU FAST WITH ERDOGAN'"**

**Date and time:** April 23, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Near to Uzunkopru

**Coordinates:** 41.26595271024839, 26.689067219808223

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 24 person(s), age: 20-50 years old , from: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock, water immersion, pouring water over one's head, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 30 Greek officers, 2-3 females, the rest male. Wearing army uniform, face-masks.

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

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:**

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

**Reported by:** Wave - Thessaloniki

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent and his friend had a white card regularizing their stay in Greece. He had been in the Drama Paranesti Pre-removal Centre for 10 months, and in Greece for 3 years. The respondent shared that he knew people who had been in the centre for longer than 10 months and met people who had ended up there because Greek authorities had promised to give them papers, but then taken them to detention and later pushed them back to Turkey.

In Drama Paranesti, he shared that people were provided with food and medicine, but were regularly beaten by authorities inside. Many people took part in a recent hunger strike in the centre, but the respondent suggests that people stopped because they were scared it would result in them being pushed back to Turkey as well.

As Ramadan was approaching, the respondent was told by camp authorities: '*We will let you fast with Erdogan*', clearly intimating the intent of officials to carry out a removal during the fasting period. During the hunger strike the officers closed all the doors so no one was allowed

outside. Approximately one month ago, people began to get sick inside the centre and the officers refused to take people to the hospital, so people started to fight. This led to the riot police being called on two occasions.

On the 23rd April 2020, police officers removed at least 24 people from the centre. The Greek authorities told them they would take them to Athens but they were instead taken to the border with Turkey. They were taken in a blue truck (likely a riot van used by the Greek police) meaning they were unable to see where they were being driven. They left the site at approximately 10:00 in the morning. The respondent believes he interacted with around 30 officers, all male except for 2-3 who were women. He said the female officers lied to him and other people in Drama, promising to provide them a paper lasting six months.

The group were driven by bus to the border with Turkey where they were confronted with an unknown number of officers wearing surgical masks who then used electric tasers and water immersion to torture the entire transit group over the course of six hours. The respondent says that officers held his head under a body of water as a punishment, and also administered electric shocks to the group.

The evening of the same day, the group were taken to the Evros river by authorities. The masked officers (described as 'military') beat the group with batons and threatened them with knives. Then the 24 people were put onto a boat in groups of around seven to be ferried across to the Turkish side.

The respondent asserts that three Afghan men were driving the boat and wearing military attire. During the push-back the officers told them:

|

***'Be careful to come back'.***

Many in the group suffered injuries as a result of the treatment from the Greek authorities, and the respondent stated some of the wounded were in hospital in Uzunköprü (TUR) which was the first large town they reached after being pushed back. He also alleged that he knew two people who had been in Greece for up to 10 years and were removed from the Drama Paranesti Pre-removal Centre and pushed back as part of this group.

When they arrived on Turkish land they were met by three Turkish officers who took them to five military personnel. The officers told them they have two options: 1) to cross the river back to Greece 2) to walk 230km to Istanbul. The group of approximately 24 people decided to split up into two smaller groups and walk to Istanbul.

**18/04/2020**

**“THE OFFICERS USED BATONS AND STICKS FROM TREES TO STRIKE THEM”**

**Date and time:** April 18, 2020 00:00

**Location:** btw Soufli (GRK) and Meric (TUR)

**Coordinates:** 41.2053735774063, 26.319997467922697

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 40 person(s), age: Respondent aged 21 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek officers dressed in blue uniforms with a patrol car, large blue "police" bus, officers in green uniform and masks at the border

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent – a 21 year old man from Morocco – was by the central train station in Thessaloniki along with two friends from Morocco on 17th April 2020. The group were approached by Greek police officers wearing blue uniforms and accompanied by patrol car. The officers stopped the men and asked them for their papers. Having none, the authorities informed the men they would be taken to detention where they would be issued a "khartia" (temporary regularisation document) and then released.

The respondent said this apprehension happened at around 17:00/18:00, after the group had been at a food distribution run by outreach volunteers. The respondent usually attended this food drop every day by taking the bus from the suburb Diavata where he was staying in an improvised shelter in the grounds of the camp.

On the day in question, the police stated they could not return to the camp and were instead taken in a vehicle a short distance to what the respondent described as a "*commissariat*" building. The men were taken inside and had all their possessions removed by police officers. This included phones, overclothes, powerbanks and a combined total of around 300 euros.

The three men were not informed further about their detention or whether they would be issued a khartia. They were detained in this police station overnight in a cell. On 18th April 2020 the police removed the three, taking them in a vehicle to another station where they were held for around 30 minutes.

At this location around 40 people were detained (including the three originally caught in this incident). The respondent said that he spoke with some of them and they stated they'd been subject to similar processes of being taken of the street by police with the promise of khartia during the previous 24 hours. The respondent says the people were from Morocco, Pakistan and Afghanistan. He stated he was the youngest at 21, meanwhile the eldest was around 40 years old.

After half an hour at the station a large blue coach was brought (with "police" written on the side). All 40 were loaded into the bus and driven for around three hours. The respondent describes how they arrived to a location close to Soufli (GRK) and were unloaded and recieved

by a new set of Greek authorities. The respondent says these officers were wearing green uniforms and face masks. The authorities were described as “cagoule” and were holding batons, tree branches, and some had tasers. The respondent says there were approximately 12 officers waiting at the border for them.

The group of 40 were walked to the river bank of the Evros. The officers used batons and sticks from trees to strike them as they walked. The respondent says that some officers used tasers on some of the Pakistani and Afghani people (targeting the exposed sections of the neck). The people were then transported in smaller groups across the river to Turkey using a small boat. The respondent said there were around ten in each turn, so the same boat went back and forward four times.

On the Turkish side, the group found the Turkish army who took them to a village and gave them some food. The respondent states that they were brought a short distance, and the village was called Meric (opposite the Greek town of Soufli). The respondent alleges the pushback must have taken place somewhere along the nearby section of border river (marked in red on the map).

17/04/2020

## “THEY WERE TOLD TO KEEP THEIR HEADS DOWN”

**Date and time:** April 17, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Greek-Turkish border, near Edirne

**Coordinates:** 41.67712969999999, 26.5557145

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 50 person(s), age: 15 years old, 35 years old , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, insulting, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek police officers, 1 in civilian clothes

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

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

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

## ORIGINAL REPORT

In this case, the respondent was picked up by Greek police around 09:00 in the morning on 17th April 2020, about 100 metres from Diavata camp, a refugee camp nearby Thessaloniki. He was told that he needed to accompany the police officers to the police station in order to be

issued a valid document. He was taken together with 15 other people who were circulating outside the camp. They were loaded in a white van.

The respondent had arrived to Greece in April 2018 and applied for asylum which was registered in May 2018. While still going through the asylum procedure, he worked as an interpreter for a Greek medical organization in a detention centre in Greece. After his contract had ended, without financial resources and accommodation, the respondent relocated to Diavata camp.

On the morning of 17th April, the respondent was approaching Diavata camp when he was stopped by the police. The policemen explained to him that since he was not in the possession of a valid applicant card, he had to accompany them to the police station to be issued a police note. The policemen loaded the respondent in the van together with 14 other people. He explains that they were forcefully pushed in the van while the policemen were kicking them with their legs and shouting at them. The respondent declares that the nationalities of people in the van were Algerian, Afghanistan, and Syria. Among them, 2 minors, an Afghan national and a Syrian national.

After a 40 minutes drive, they arrived at a police station. They were shoved into a small room that could hardly accommodate the number of people present, to the extent that they fell down when the door was closed. Afterwards, one by one they were taken into an office where they were forced to sign a document provided to them in Greek, without the document being translated to them with the use of an interpreter in a language they could understand. The respondent could communicate with the authorities in English, however they refused to explain the content of the document he was signing. He states that the policemen were aggressive and refused to give additional explanations. During this time, all the persons in questions were searched and their phones were removed together with their headphones and any additional electronic devices and cables.

After two hours and a half and once everyone was walked through the same procedure, the group was taken outside and loaded into a bigger van. The van proceeded to transport them to a place which the respondent describes as a detention centre, surrounded by barbed wire and fence. He states that he could not observe more details because they were told to keep their heads down throughout the time they were kept there. The group was once again searched and all their belongings were removed: backpacks, shoelaces, jumpers or sweaters, and the money in their possession, respectively. They were left in light clothing and they were loaded into a bus – the respondent describes it as – a police bus, with individual locked cabins, without windows and complete darkness. The respondent recalls that additional people were taken from this location and loaded into the bus. He estimates that around 50 persons were in the bus, including the group of 15 which was taken from Diavata.

The bus drove for more than 5 hours and reached a place close to a railroad and next to a river. The respondent and the others were taken out of the bus and moved into another vehicle described as a military vehicle. Before the policemen transferred the group from one vehicle to the other, they performed another body search, this time hitting the persons over their heads and backs with batons. The respondent recalls one person in the group fell to the ground because of the heavy blows.

The respondent recalls waiting in the military vehicle for a long time, he estimates to more than one hour, before being driven to a different location. He describes that he was on the bank of a wider and deeper river. The police had also brought along 4 or 5 boats which they inflated with

a pump. The large group was separated and was ferried across the river in groups of 9 to 10. The respondent says that the boats were inflated one after the other and launched quickly in the river to speed up the crossing. He recalls that the 4 or 5 boats were launched almost at the same time. The boats were ferried across with the help of non-police personnel. The respondent recalls that one of the persons assisting the police was also an Afghan national who confided in him that the police had told them that they will be given an asylum card if they accept to work with them.

Due to the fact that the crossing was hurried to avoid the Turkish border guards becoming aware of the operation, according to the respondent, one of the persons in the boat fell into the river and almost drowned. He states that everyone in the group had gotten wet trying to descend from the boats, at night, without visibility, and that once crossed over they had to start a fire in order to stay warm.

Lastly, the respondent states that he spent around 3 days between the Greek and Turkish border. The following day, the group was stopped by the Turkish border guards who drove them back to the river bank and pushed them back to Greece. Once again on Greek territory, they were captured by the Greek border guards, they were beaten and pushed once again back to Turkey. In Turkey, they were stopped by the Turkish border police who proceeded to send them to Greece one more time. The respondent states that one of the persons in the group spoke Turkish and was begging the Turkish commander not to send them back. The Turkish commander took out his gun and pointed it at the head of the person and told him he has to go. Then they forcefully pushed the group back once again to Greece, from where the group returned for a third and last time. Avoiding the border guards and the police, they managed to reach Istanbul, on foot, walking 3 days and 3 nights.

16/04/2020

## “REMOVED FROM THESSALONIKI AND PUSHED BACK ACROSS THE MERIC RIVER”

**Date and time:** April 16, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Meric river GRK-TUR

**Coordinates:** 40.700484915197784, 22.859056428505102

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 50 person(s), age: respondent aged 26 years old , from: Afghanistan, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), electric shock, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek police in black uniform, civil officers, white vans with barred windows, large blue police coach, armed military officer (masked with guns)

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On Wednesday 15th April 2020, the respondent – a 26 year old Afghani male – was staying with other people in Diavata camp, close to Thessaloniki (GRK). He was camping with others in an informal section of the site, made of tents and over spill shelters built because the facility was already full.

During the morning, Greek police dressed in black and several officers in civil clothing entered the camp. They arrived with several vehicles: small white vans with barred windows, and a larger blue coach with “Police” written on the outside of it. The officers rounded up approximately 50 people from the camp.

### “They catch us in the camp”

The respondent says the people taken included many Afghans, as well as North African people from Morocco and Algeria. The police told the groups that they were to be taken to the station temporarily to be issued “*khartias*” [informal name for a short term legalisation document. Some had papers with an expired date, though according the measures brought in by the Greek government, these remained valid until the asylum office opened again after the COVID-19 restrictions.

The respondent had a scheduled interview at the asylum office for mid March, but this had been cancelled because of the health restrictions. He still had a hand written note with the date and time of this appointment.

The officers loaded them into the vans and bus and drove them a short distance. The respondent recalls the vehicles taking them onto the main road running into Thessaloniki (Motorway 2) because he recognised the 81 bus line which he regularly took. After a short drive the 50 people were disembarked at a large police station where many officers and cars were stationed.

The group were taken inside the station, but rather than being processed and issued “*khartia*”, the officers ordered them to lie down and searched them. The police took phones, money and other valuable possessions. The officers also reportedly used batons to hit the majority of the people, and also used handheld taser devices to administer electric shocks to some peoples legs. The respondent recalls how one of the officers in civil clothes ordered them to lie on the floor:

### “Sleep here, don’t move”

Following this, many of the people were assaulted with batons by the officers present. The police then removed the group into an outdoor/parking area where they were detained for approximately two hours. During this time it rained and the group got very wet and cold.

The Greek officers then loaded the 50 people into a large bus (blue with “police” written on the side) and drove them for several hours. The group were disembarked in the evening and held in a facility staffed by Greek military personnel. The officers inside were described as wearing

## *“Military uniform, masks, guns, electric [taser]”*

The people were held there overnight in shared cells. The respondent describes how violence was used by the military officers inside the detention space. The next day, Thursday 16th April 2020, they were taken in a van and moved to another site which was staffed by similarly dressed authorities. After this they were put in several vans and driven to the Meric river. There, the Greek military officers removed them from the vans and forced them to strip near the bank of the river. The authorities beat the group again with batons, leaving visible bruising.

The people were divided and ferried across in smaller groups in a boat. Once the respondent had been pushed back onto the Turkish side he reports being found by Turkish police who held them. The officers told them they could not stay in Turkey and had to reenter Greece. The Turkish officials made them wait and said they would bring the men a boat for them to cross back. The respondent and others then ran away from the river to avoid this, and eventually found their way to Istanbul.

14/04/2020

## “MUGGED BY THE GREEK POLICE OFFICERS DURING THREE SUBSEQUENT PUSHBACKS”

**Date and time:** April 14, 2020 13:00

**Location:** Evros/Meric river near Gemici, Turkey

**Coordinates:** 41.32621396046, 26.566624859357

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 76 person(s), age: 15-35, from: Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, exposure to air condition and extreme temperature during car ride, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek policemen in black uniforms and balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

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

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Anonymous Partner

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a 35-year-old man from Morocco, was apprehended on the 14th of April by Greek authorities in Thessaloniki at 1:00 pm on April 14th at the Philoxenia food distribution site, together with two other Moroccans, both aged between 25 and 30 years old. The police arrived to the location with an unmarked white van with no windows and a Škoda car. One of the people apprehended had a registration paper issued by the police (“khartia”), but a policeman took it and ripped it apart. The policemen beat them with metal batons, put them in the van,

and took them to a police station near the bus station of Thessaloniki. At the police station, they were put in a room together with 32 other people, some of which were minors, for a couple of hours. They were not given any access to food or water. After that, 5 officers wearing balaclavas took away people's money, mobile phones, and shoes, and beat them.

Then the police took them to a large blue police bus with separate departments. Their belongings were never returned to them. There were four people squeezed in one bus compartment, and it was very hot with no air conditioning.

They arrived at the Greek-Turkish border at 8:00 pm, after a 5 hour drive. There were other migrants being held at the border by authorities clad in black uniforms with Greek flags in their upper arms, wearing balaclavas. There were 76 migrants in total, from Palestine, Syria, Pakistan, Morocco, and Algeria at the Evros/Meriç riverside, waiting to be pushed across the border to Turkey. The police were putting people in groups of 12 into a boat, operated by two persons that might have been from Pakistan, according to our respondent. Some people refused to enter the boat because they were afraid, but the police beat them and forced them into the boat.

After crossing the river, the people were caught by the Turkish gendarmerie, who took them to a detention camp in Edirne, where they were kept in quarantine for 20 days and then released.

The respondent was subsequently pushed back two more times across the same border. The first time, after he crossed the border from Turkey to Greece together with a 28 years-old Moroccan, they were caught by the Greek police right at the Evros/Meriç riverside on the border. They were directly pushed back to Turkey with no violence involved.

The same two people crossed the border into Greece another time and managed to reach Kavala. On the 19th of June, they were apprehended by the Greek police in Kavala at 00:30 at night. The police started beating them immediately with fists and kicking them. Then they were put into a white van with the "Police" sign, and brought to a location where they were put into a blue van with no police signs or windows. This van took them to the Evros riverside on the border between Orestiada, Greece, and Edirne, Turkey. The journey lasted about 3 hours. Then the four Greek officers in black uniforms and balaclavas ordered the two persons-on-the-move to board the boat, operated by a man from Pakistan, which took them across the river to Turkey. From there, the pair walked to Edirne, where they took a taxi to Istanbul. Our respondent stayed in Turkey for 45 days, before he crossed the border into Greece again and managed to arrive in Thessaloniki.

In each of the subsequent pushbacks, the respondent's mobile phone, money, and other belongings were stolen by the police.

***"It just hurts when they take everything from you, they took the phones, the money..." he said.***

31/03/2020

## “TAKEN FROM DIAVATA CAMP (GRK) AND PUSHED BACK VIOLENTLY TO TURKEY”

**Date and time:** March 31, 2020 00:00

**Location:** Meric river (btw GRK/TUR)

**Coordinates:** 40.70014283507027, 22.859823015223206

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 40 person(s), age: 19 - 40+ (respondents aged 24, 30, 26) , from: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek officers wearing black uniforms, one large bus, large blue bus with "police" written on the side, several smaller unmarked vans

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Border Violence Monitoring, Balkan Info Van, Mobile Info Team

### ORIGINAL REPORT

Reportedly on the 29th March 2020, 40 people were removed by Greek police from inside Diavata camp (**Echedoro 545 00**), close to the city of Thessaloniki in Greece. Several persons who were removed gave matching accounts of Greek police officers who entered the camp and approached those specifically who were staying in tents and improvised shelters in the grounds of the site.

One respondent, a man from Tunisia, explained how he was approached in the camp by two police officers (one man and one woman). They allegedly said to him:

***“Where is your khartia? How long have you been in Greece?”***

“Khartia” is the informal name for a legal document to regularize stay in Greece, and was offered to a number of people staying in the grounds of Diavata camp on the conditions they came with the officers. The respondent was told by the police that he would be taken to a police station for 1-2 days and be issued this document. He was told he would be returned to the camp and that he didn’t need to bring any of his possessions. Another man from Algeria shared the same experience, having been told by officers:

***“We are going to do khartia”***

He was also denied the chance to collect his possessions and informed he would be back at the camp within two days. Up to 40 persons were loaded into vans in the camp on the basis of receiving a khartia from the police. The people in the group were from a range of countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The authorities drove them a short distance (approx. 10 minutes) to a police station where they were unloaded and brought inside.

But rather than being processed and issued the aforementioned paper, the 40 persons had their possessions removed (including phones, money, parts of their clothing and shoes). One respondent recalls that people in the group vocalised expression for asylum, but the Greek officers in the station used physical intimidation and hit people who continued to verbalise these requests. The same day, the group was loaded into a large blue bus with "police" written on the side. The people were not informed of the reasons they were detained, nor of their destination. The bus drove for around five hours and delivered them to an unknown detention site.

The group were unloaded at this site at around sunset on the day they were arrested. The respondent from Tunisia stated: "*It did not look like a police station*" and it was an "*old house*" in the some trees/unpopulated countryside. Meanwhile another group member stated that the detention space was also close to an abandoned railway station, and was in the area of Alexandroupolis (GRK).

The detention conditions were described as very poor. The respondents recall how they were held for two days in cramped conditions, and without enough food. One suggests they were ordered by officers to share some small amount of bread as the only meal they received. Meanwhile another described the sleeping conditions as 20 beds per room, and that they were one of several rooms within the site. During the two days they were held there, the respondents did not report receiving violence directly to themselves, but state that other people in their group did suffer beatings from Greek authorities.

On the night of 31st March/1st April 2020 at least 20 persons were loaded into vehicles (some into a large bus and some into a smaller van) and driven to the Evros/Meric river. The respondents describe the journey as taking around 15-30 minutes. They were unloaded in the dark next to the river and ordered to strip to their underwear. The Greek authorities used batons and fists to hit some members of the group. After the beating, the transit group were placed in a rubber dingy (small plastic vessel) and transported to the Turkish side of the river.

This occurred in two stages, with around ten people transported each time. The respondents describe the driver of the boat being a masked person that they suspected to be Moroccan who was working with the Greek police. This person steering the boat did not start the motor, allegedly to make "*no noise*" in order to not alert the Turkish authorities to the pushback. The driver reportedly returned to the Greek bank of the river with the boat after conveying the second group across. As they were pushed back to Turkey the Greek officers shouted at them to continue walking. In this way the total transit group was dispersed into several smaller groups of around 6-7 people, meaning that when the respondent landed on the Turkish side he did not find the group that was ferried before him.

After the pushback, the group approached officers of the Turkish Gendarmerie who were patrolling in the area. They were all taken to a detention facility somewhere nearby and held for

three day before being released. The respondents describe fair treatment during this period, having been issued clothes, shoes and food.

20/02/2020

## “THE MEN WERE REFUSED WATER AND WERE ONLY ALLOWED FOOD IF THEY PAID €2”

**Date and time:** February 20, 2020 05:00

**Location:** Alexandroupoli, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.625268, 26.565369999999999

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 40 person(s), age: 16-35 years old , from: Pakistan, Morocco

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** Police officers wearing balaclavas and black uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water, forced to pay fee, denial of medical support

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

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent attempted to cross the Turkey-Greece border on the 19th of February 2020. The respondent is Moroccan and 16 years old. The respondent was travelling with his friend who was male, 23 years old and also from Morocco. The respondent and his friend arrived at the Greek border city of Orestiada where they bought a bus ticket to Alexandroupoli (GRK).

The transit group took the bus to Alexandroupoli but were unable to buy another ticket for onward travel because they had run out of money, hence they began walking out of the city. Approximately 10 kilometres away from Alexandroupoli (GRK), the respondent's friend fell over and injured his foot. Unable to continue, the respondent and his friend sought help from three male police officers. This was at about 16:00 in the afternoon on the 19th of February.

The police officers took the respondent and his friend to a police station near Alexandroupoli (GRK) which the respondent described was only for migrants and was 'very old'. In the police station, the men were refused water and were only allowed food if they paid €2. The police officers bandaged the injured foot but did not offer the respondent's friend any additional medical care. The respondent was kept in detention for nine hours

At 05:00 the following morning (20th February 2020), the respondent was driven from the location by Greek authorities and five officers wearing black uniforms and balaclavas pushed the respondent and his friend back to Turkey. The officers brought the respondent and his

friend with a group of approximately 40 other men from Pakistan and Morocco between the ages of 25 and 35 years old to the Greek side of the River Evros (border between GRK and TU). The officers asked all the men where they were from and their ages as well as taking all of their phones.

The officers in balaclavas pushed the group across the River Evros in one boat. The respondent explains that conditions were 'so cold'. After the respondent reached the Turkish border city of Edirne, the respondent and his friend were stopped by Turkish army. They were kept in a camp in Bosna, close to Edirne (TUR) for one night. The respondent's fingerprint and photograph were taken. The respondent explains that some of the people at this camp were punched by officers.

**08/02/2020**

## **“PEOPLE WERE FORCED TO UNDRESS AND THEN, EIGHT BY EIGHT, WERE LOADED INTO A BOAT”**

**Date and time:** February 8, 2020 21:00

**Location:** Alexandroupoli, Greece

**Coordinates:** 40.981204, 26.325298

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 16 person(s), age: 27-30 , from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Unknown

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), kicking, forcing to undress, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Black uniforms and balaclavas; army uniforms

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water, physical violence (beating)

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent in this case, a 27-year-old man from Morocco, was in the city of Alexandroupoli (GR) with other five men from Morocco and Algeria aged 29-30, when they were caught by police, at approximately 23.00 on 7th February 2020. Five policemen wearing black uniforms and ski masks forced the transit group onto a bus where there were already around 30 people detained. This group was composed of men, women and children, hailing from different countries, including Pakistan and Syria.

The people on the bus were transported to a “*detention centre*” near Alexandroupoli. The respondent is not aware of the exact location however it is likely that this was one of the three border-guard outposts which serve a detention centres [Feres, Tycherio or Soufli] in the area. In total, approximately 50 people were being held at the detention centre. There, six male and four female officers stole the detainees money and “everything”. Some of these officers were

wearing the same black uniforms of those that apprehended the transit group, whilst others were dressed in what was described as “army uniform”. In addition to the theft, the officers beat some people with batons, “*some people like a little bit, some people too much*”. The respondent himself was beaten with the baton and punched. Access to both water and food was denied and only permission to use the toilets was granted. No one asked for asylum.

People were detained until the next day, 8th February 2020, at around 21.00, sixteen of them were loaded in a big vehicle similar to a bus “closed like detention” and were transported to the Meriç/Evros river (approximate coordinates 40.981204,26.325298). There, four police officers were waiting to push them back to Turkey. People were forced to undress and then, eight by eight, were loaded into a boat from which they could not see outside; because of this, the respondent does not know who was driving the boat. When they reached Turkey, the Turkish police, “the army” saw them and shot in the air, shouting at them ““be there, don’t come”. So, the transit group waited there for three nights close to the border area sleeping outside. Then they managed to escape police control and headed to a town where they had previously slept.

The same respondent also refers to a previous time when, still in Turkey, he tried to cross the same river from which he was pushed back in this last case (approximate coordinates 40.981204,26.325298) on, around 3rd February 2020. At the time of this previous attempt, the respondent was caught with another eight men (Morocco, Algeria, aged 27-32) by four Turkish police officers wearing army uniforms with the Turkish flag. The respondent and his group were transported, travelling on a bus for roughly 30 minutes, to a nearby camp whose name the respondent cannot recall. After spending three days in the camp, the group was transferred to a police station where no translator was present to facilitate the ongoing procedures. There, the respondents had their fingerprints and pictures taken and received a paper from the police containing personal information such as name and age, which the respondent describes as a sort of “carta”.

11/12/2019

## “DETAINED FOR TWO DAYS WITHOUT FOOD, WITHOUT WATER”

**Date and time:** December 11, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Soufli, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.128335, 26.321678

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 20 person(s), age: 41, from: Syria, Morocco

**Minors involved?** Yes

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), insulting, forcing to undress, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 3 Greek police officers and 1 van at initial arrest. Unknown number of Greek police at site of detention and during push-back. 2 vehicles and 2 boats used in push back. Unknown number of Turkish officers.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On approximately 9th December 2019, the respondent was at a supermarket buying food in the town of Soufli (GRK) when he was approached by three male, Greek police officers. The officers apprehended the respondent, asking him to take off his shoes before placing him in the back of a police van. Here, he discovered two other people from Syria who had been caught by the police earlier that day.

The respondent was then taken to a “prison” (coordinates 41.190806,26.304000) where there were lots of large vehicles with people being detained in the back of them. Here, the police stole everything from the respondent:

“all the phones, all the money, all the clothes, all the bag,”

The officers also stole the food he had bought at the market and his friend’s passport, which he was looking after. The respondent was denied access to the toilet while inside the detention facility and remembers being provided a dirty blanket covered in urine (“*have like pee*”). In relation to the lack of toilet facilities the respondent said

**“if you want to pee, you should to pee in one bottle. And you can see a lot of old bottle from the pee. It was so disgusting”**

The respondent also describes two incidents inside the detainment facility, one, where the police began filming a 60 year old man (allegedly speaking Bulgarian) who they had allowed to go to the toilet. And another, where the police beat people for knocking on the doors of the cells where they were being held. The respondent was detained for two days “*without food, without water*” but encountered other people who had been held there for up to a week. During this time, the police did not take the respondent’s details or fingerprints. However, they did mislead him by promising to take him to a camp.

On 11th December 2020, at night, the police drove the respondent and a group of around 20 people (men, women and children, from Syria, Morocco and Bulgaria) to the Evros river (coordinates 41.128335, 26.321678). The police wore black and used binoculars (this the respondent said was to look out for Turkish police).

The group was split in half and put onto two separate boats. Then, the police threw a bag into the river claiming it had everyone’s phones in it, although the respondent said he thought the bag looked like it was actually full of rocks. The respondent was told, “*Shut up, we don’t want to hear you. Be quiet.*” Then, making as little noise as possible, the boats moved slowly across the river, and the two groups were released onto Turkish land.

Approximately 500 meters inland, the transit group were met by Turkish police or “army” who provided them with food and clothing, and helped to make a fire. Afterwards, people who were

sick were provided access to medical care and taken to the hospital whilst the others had their papers checked. Many people were then removed to unknown locations, but those without documentation, like the respondent, were provided with a "paper".

At a later date when the respondent was able to successfully cross to Greece, his transit group (eight men from Syria, Palestine and Iraq, between the ages of 18-46) had to endure snowy conditions walking through the Greek mountains and said he feared for their lives. They managed to reach Xanthi (GRK) where some passersby offered the transit group transport to Thessaloniki, before threatening them with knives and stealing their money, phones and power banks. The respondent compared this experience to that of the Greek police and suggested both were "like mafia".

29/11/2019

## "I DON'T KNOW IF HE IS DEAD OR HE IS ALIVE. I HAVE NO IDEA"

**Date and time:** November 29, 2019 06:00

**Location:** Evros river, near Uzunkopru (est. loc.)

**Coordinates:** 41.329620651505046, 26.600317092350565

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 25-6 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** water immersion, theft of personal belongings, binding hands and feet

**Police involved:** 13-4 balaclava officers ("kagol") in Greek territory. Later handed over to Turkish police officers.

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

### ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent attempted to cross the Turkey-Greece border on the night of 28/29th of November 2019. The respondent was in a transit group of three other people between the ages of 25-26 years old. They were all from Morocco. The transit group attempted to cross the border from the Turkish city of Uzunkopru which is located next the Evros River that runs along the border between Turkey and Greece.

The transit group crossed the border at around 05:00-06:00. On reaching Greek land, the transit group saw officers in balaclavas and proceeded to hide under a tree. The police officers caught one of the members of the transit group. The officers in balaclavas tied this man's wrists and ankles together using plastic cable ties and threw him into the Evros River. The respondent states that he still does not know what happened to this man:

***“I don’t know if he is dead or he is alive. I have no idea”***

The other members of transit group ran for about 200m but were arrested by more officers in balaclavas.

The respondent explains that there were about 13 to 14 officers. The officers took the transit groups belongings and then took the group to a prison on the Greek side of the river. The transit group was then pushed back to Turkey (on the same day of 29th November 2019, where they were given to Turkish police. The Turkish police took everything that the transit group had left including clothes, phone, money and jewelry.

**06/11/2019**

## **“THEY BEAT US WITH A BATON WITHOUT CARING WHICH PART OF THE BODY THEY WOULD HIT”**

**Date and time:** November 6, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Orestiada

**Coordinates:** 41.50138413299929, 26.53166787910152

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 5 person(s), age: 20-26 years old , from: Algeria, Tunisia

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, destruction of personal belongings, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** Greek officers wearing balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, denial of food/water

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

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent attempted to cross the Turkey-Greece border in a transit group of five people during the evening in early November. The transit group consisted of the respondent and his four friends. Four of the people were from Algeria and one person was from Tunisia. The transit group was arrested in the Greek city called Orestiada, which is close to the Turkish border, by police officers wearing balaclavas. The respondent describes them as having a strong and broad physique.

These police officers treated the transit group in “*a horrific way – inhumane*”. He explains there were about five police officers, but he is not able to say for certain as he was being beaten so was unable to look up at the police officers. The respondent recounts that the police officers beat them with batons, broke their mobile phones, took any large sums of money and burnt their sleeping bags.

***“They (police officers wearing balaclavas) beat us with baton without caring about what part of their body they would hit. One of my friends was hit in the head. There was blood. They were treating us in an inhumane way. We are refugees not anything else.”***

After the beating, the transit group was tied up and taken to a camp close to the border that the respondent describes as “resembling a prison”. The transit group were put in a dirty, small room that contained around 60-70 people.

***“They didn’t provide us with food and the water we drank was from the toilet.”***

The transit group stayed at this camp for two nights and were forced to cross the Evros river back to Turkey at midnight (approximately 24:00 on 6th November 2019). The respondent shared that he didn’t know exactly where the camp where he had been detained or the precise pushback site because the police officers broke their phones when the group was arrested (and so he was unable to use a GPS).

**Note:**The respondent in this incident stated he had been arrested by police on three attempts at trying to cross the Turkey-Greece border, but this encounter had been far more traumatic. The first two times the respondent attempted to cross the border, he was push-backed to Turkey in a non-violent manner. However, reflecting on this incident the respondent shared the level of violence inflicted during removal from Greece compared to previous experiences. The transit group had been arrested by police officers the previous two times (once in the Greek town, Didymoteicho, and once in the Greek city, Alexandroupoli). On these first two attempts, the police officers brought the transit group back to a Greek camp before pushing them back to Turkey.

**24/10/2019**

## **“BEATEN AND IMPRISONED BY GREEK POLICE”**

**Date and time:** October 24, 2019 00:00

**Location:** Nea Vyssa

**Coordinates:** 41.58101804671091, 26.54130550193679

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 3 person(s), age: 18-25 years old , from: Morocco

**Minors involved?** No

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

**Police involved:** Greek police officers, non-uniformed men in balaclavas

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Philoxenia

## ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent crossed the Turkey-Greece border on the 24th of October, 2019 from the Turkish city of Edirne. The respondent was in a transit group with two other people from Morocco (group members aged 18, 22 and 25 years old). On route to the Greek village of Nea Vyssa, the transit group was stopped by two police officers. The respondent was able to identify the officers as part of the Greek police forces from their uniform.

The officers violently beat the men in the transit group using batons. The beating from Greek police officers left the respondent as well as another man in the transit group with broken arms.

The group was then taken to a facility described by the respondent as being like a prison and being very dirty. The transit group were not given any food during their detention in this site.

Officers in balaclavas took the transit group back to the border of Greece-Turkey and pushed them back to the Turkish town of Uzunkopru. The officers took all possessions from the transit group including money, clothes and mobile phones.

**03/07/2019**

**“THEY ARRIVED IN TWO VEHICLES WITH FOUR POLICEMEN. ONE WAS A WHITE NISSAN PICKUP WHILE THE OTHER ONE WAS A JEEP”**

**Date and time:** July 3, 2019 11:00

**Location:** Komotini, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.151944, 25.432861

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** 4 person(s), age: Respondent was aged 45, Algerian man 34 and two Moroccans 26 and 37, from: Morocco, Algeria

**Minors involved?** Yes

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

**Police involved:** 4 Greek Policemen (masked and in military uniform) with one van, 2 police cars + an undefined number of Turkish police upon readmission

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, photos taken, personal information taken

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

## ORIGINAL REPORT

On the 28th of June 2019, the respondent aged 47 from Algeria left Edirne, Turkey at 21:00 by foot to enter Greece, with three other people, one from Algeria while two others from Morocco. The transit group managed to cross the fence at around 22:30. While scaling the fence, the respondent felt that there were some chemicals on the fence which caused the group members body to become itchy. After entering Greek territory, the transit group walked for almost 40 minutes in the direction of Greek-Bulgarian border.

Afterwards, the group took some rest in a nearby forest and then continued their journey. They kept on walking for five nights while resting during the day time. On the 3rd of July 2019, at around 11:00 in the morning, in a forest near a road (see map below for approximate location), the group was caught by the officers in green uniform whom the respondent termed as "police".

*"They arrived in two vehicles with four policemen. One was a White Nissan Pickup while the other one was a jeep".*

Police searched the bodies of the transit group and subsequently handcuffed them. Afterwards, they were transferred in the White Nissan Pickup's trunk and were transported to a building with two very dirty rooms having an attached small toilet which respondent termed as "a jail in a police station". The room in which the transit group was put had six people including children and women from Iraq, Syria and Somalia. Meanwhile the respondent states that another room held approximately 40 people and most of them from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The group was detained for almost five hours and at around 19:00, four officials wearing a military uniform with their faces masked came whom respondent termed as "Greek Military" personals. The military personnel, along with some Greek policemen, put all the detainees of both rooms in a police van.

After 1.5 hours of driving the police van reached a place which respondent termed as a "camp" where more people were loaded into the van. According to the respondent they were not allowed to get down from the vehicle while more people were forcibly put into the vehicle.

At this stage the respondent termed the behavior of the authorities as inhumane, because they were beating people to get inside the vehicle despite the fact there was not enough room available. Once all the people were inside, the vehicle started moving, now also escorted by two police vehicles. One from the front while the other one from the back.

At around 21:00, the group reached a place near a river where they were asked to get down. Here they saw two wooden motor boats which were used to ship the people to the other side of the river. With 10 people boarded on each boat accompanied by two military personnel, the transit groups were dropped at different spots on the Turkish side of the river. Thus, all the people were pushed back to the Turkish side from Greek territory. Once they were all in Turkey, the military personnel fired in the air to alert the Turkish authorities. Soon Turkish authorities, which the respondent termed as Turkish military, arrived at the scene and arrested all the

people. However, some managed to flee. The respondent and his friend were among the ones arrested.

According to the respondent they were taken to a police station in Edirne where their personal data was taken along with photographs. Afterwards, they were moved by the Turkish authorities to Istanbul where they were released.

**18/05/2019**

## **“COMMANDOS SHOULD HAVE TAKEN CARE OF HUMANITY; THEY PUNCHED ME AND TOOK MY 400 EUROS”**

**Date and time:** May 18, 2019 03:00

**Location:** Mandra, Greece

**Coordinates:** 41.243598, 26.313322

**Pushback from:** Greece

**Pushback to:** Turkey

**Demographics:** Initially 3, which increased to around 40-45 afterwards. person(s), age: 47 of the respondent, two other people around 20-25, from: Syria

**Minors involved?** No

**Violence used:** beating (with batons/hands/other), pushing people to the ground, theft of personal belongings

**Police involved:** 7 Greek policemen having Greek flag sewed on their uniforms. 2 Police Cars

**Taken to a police station?:** yes

**Treatment at police station or other place of detention:** detention, no translator present, denial of access to toilets, denial of food/water

**Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?:** No

**Reported by:** Mobile Info Team

### **ORIGINAL REPORT**

The respondent who is aged 47 started his journey on 15th of May 2019 from Edirne (Turkey). He was with two other people aged between 20 to 25, making a group of three. The group managed to cross the river which borders Turkey and Greece with a boat. They continued their journey and passed through a village which the respondent named Didymoteicho.

The group walked for three days until they were apprehended by Greek police at 3:30 am on 18th of May 2019 in a forest which is separated by a road (approximate coordinates: 41.243598, 26.313322), not far away from the Greek town Mandra.

According to the respondent, he saw two police cars with seven policemen approaching them and they finally managed to arrest the group.

The group tried to explain their situation to the policemen, saying that they don't want asylum in Greece and just want to continue their journey towards Germany. However, the officers didn't pay heed to what the group was saying. The respondent tried to show them all the documents proving that his family had been granted asylum in Germany, but the officers didn't reply to any of their comments. The officers took the group's cell phones and never gave them back to their owners. Soon they called a van with two civilian people on board. The van, according to respondent, was not a police vehicle but a white civilian Volkswagen van. He described the van to have been very small, making it difficult for them to even breathe. They couldn't see the front compartment of the vehicle as there was a barrier between the front seats and the rear compartment where the group was placed.

After some 45 minutes of driving, around 4:15 am, the van reached a building which the respondent called "prison". They were put in a cell behind bars. The group found out that there were already around 25 people present in the building who also had tried to cross the border.

During their detention, the respondent wasn't provided food, and neither did he have access to a toilet. Moreover, access to translator was also not provided. The next night, around 7pm, all the detained persons, including families with children, were told to board a big van and were shifted to an unknown place.

This time, according to the respondent, the people who put them into the big van and accompanied them all the way were not the local police but "commandos" who were eight in number with desert colored uniforms wearing masks with only their eyes visible. All the people were told to remain head down while being put into the van so that they could not have a closer look at the "commandos".

After an hour journey, all the people were now taken out of the van at a place which was near a river. As it turned out, the river was the border river between Greece and Turkey. There were already some more arrested people lying on the ground with their heads down. According to the respondent, now the total number of people was around 40 – 45. This larger group consisted of people from Syria, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia.

At this stage of the interview, the respondent termed the behavior of the commandos towards the people on the move as "inhuman". The officers in the desert-colored uniforms punched, kicked and hit all the people with batons. According to the respondent, one Egyptian refugee was hit with batons on his head which resulted in a serious head injury as he immediately fell down on the ground and started bleeding.

"Commandos should have taken care of humanity; they punched me and took my 400 Euros".

After gathering all the people together, the officers made them cross the river with a boat. There were two boats which were repeatedly used to shift the people to the other side of the river, each time with one boat carrying ten people accompanied by two armed officers. This way, all the people were shifted to the other side of the river which was in Turkey at around 9:30 pm on 19th of May.

There were no Turkish authorities on the other side of the river. The respondent then went to Istanbul to borrow some money from one of his relatives there as all of his money along with personal belongings had been taken by the Greek authorities.

# PUSHBACKS, PULLBACKS AND DELAYED OR NON-ASSISTANCE AT SEA

In addition to the continued use of illegal pushbacks across land borders, BVMN is increasingly concerned about the growing use of sea-pushbacks, punitive delays or non-assistance at sea, and pullbacks at maritime borders. In contrast to external European borders being a focal point for terrestrial pushbacks, the Central Mediterranean has been identified as a focal point for the mistreatment of migrants and refugees at sea.

BVMN's external partner Sea-Watch, a non-profit civil search and rescue organisation, has been conducting aerial monitoring of the Central Mediterranean for the last three years with the assistance of the Swiss NGO Humanitarian Pilots Initiative. From January until October 2020 Sea-Watch's aircrews flew almost 480 hours over the Central Mediterranean Sea identifying 4493 persons in 82 distress cases. 18 of the cases of individuals in distress at sea were intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. A total of around 1298 people were illegally pulled back to war-torn Libya.

Current evidence suggests that pullbacks carried out by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard are carried out under the coordination of the EBCGA (Frontex) or the European military operation EUNAVFOR MED. Widely publicised evidence demonstrates how European actors are also present with reconnaissance aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea, with which they spot distress cases and forward the relevant information to the so-called Libyan Coast Guard. At the beginning of 2019, the European Union had removed the last military naval assets with the clear mandate to rescue people from distress in the Central Mediterranean.

Furthermore, interceptions and pullbacks to Libya are facilitated by non-assistance of European authorities or merchant vessels in the vicinity of a distress case, often in direct violation of international law [1][2][3]. The continued trend of non-assistance is further solidified through the actions of EU Member States who regularly refuse the disembarkation of rescued people as shown in the case of the commercial vessels Talia [4] and Maersk Etienne [5].

Current evidence of the interceptions and pullbacks to Libya, indicate that they even take place in the Maltese Search-and-Rescue zone. During these pullbacks, the interception and return to Libya would be coordinated by the Maltese Rescue Coordination Centre.

The Mediterranean Sea remains one of the deadliest borders in the world. During Sea-Watch reconnaissance activities, their aircrews have in the past seen the deadly results of the European border regime. In addition to Sea-Watch documenting evidence of illegal pushbacks, pullbacks and delayed or non-assistance at sea, during the first ten months of 2020, Sea-Watch aircrews spotted 50 empty boats. The outcome of these distress cases mostly remains unclear with some likely being intercepted by the so-called Libyan Coast Guard and pulled back to Libya, others are possibly the remnants of shipwrecks. Between the 29th June 2020 and 11th July 2020, Sea-Watch identified several dead bodies at sea, affirming the continued need for an active humanitarian presence in the Mediterranean.

*Written by SeaWatch*

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**1 United Nations. (1982).** United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 98: Duty to Render Assistance. Available: [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf). [Accessed 04/12/2020].

**2 SOLAS Convention. (1980).** The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, Regulation 33/V: Safety of Navigation. Available: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201184/volume-1184-I-18961-English.pdf> [Accessed 04/12/2020].

**3 SAR Convention. (1979).** Search and Rescue Convention. Available: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201405/volume-1405-I-23489-English.pdf> [Accessed 04/12/2020]

**4 The Guardian. (2020).** A Commercial Ship Saved 27 Migrants, but Now the EU Has Abandoned it at Sea. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/04/ship-rescued-migrants-eu-sea-tanker-malta-european>. [Accessed 04/12/2020].

**5 Info Migrants. (2020).** Migrants on Cargo Ship Maersk Etienne Disembark in Italy After 39 Days at Sea. Available: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/27240/migrants-on-cargo-ship-maersk-etienne-disembark-in-italy-after-39-days-at-sea>. [Accessed 04/12/2020].

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