



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**



ILLEGAL PUSH-BACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS



APRIL 2021

BALKAN REGION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April, the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN)* reported on 42 pushbacks, impacting 1125 people-on-the-move at borders across the Balkans. This report brings together the latest first hand testimony and data on these incidents, highlighting the violent methods used by police across the EU external border. The report also looks at the involvement of other actors in violence at borders and interiors, such as right wing groups.

Mass removals from Durrës in the north west of Albania, coupled with pushbacks from Aegean islands such as Samos presented continual reminders of the way pushback practices reach deep into interiors, as well as direct border areas. This spread of violence across urban and rural policing is one aspect analysed in this report. There are also other updates regarding border landscapes and the way different authorities have integrated violent removals into their everyday work, such as at the Romanian-Serbian border.

One of the most pressing developments in April was the Constitutional Court Ruling issued regarding the family of Madina Hussiny, a 6 year old Afghan girl killed during a pushback from Croatia. The report looks at the ruling, both for the family of Madina and within the broader context of continued violations at Croatia borders. In a month when BVMN published a stark dataset on the use of torture against people-on-the-move, the courts findings link into years of evidence about severe abuse during pushbacks.

Alongside this grave evidence around fatal border violence, the report also looks at systematic barriers and abuse connected to translation during pushbacks from countries such as Croatia and Romania. Testimonies from April illustrate the various ways that law enforcement use language as a means of gatekeeping access to asylum, outsourcing communication during pushbacks, and physically attacking persons deemed as smugglers.

In the Evros region, BVMN documented the continuation of several trends identified in the last months, particularly regarding: the continued occurrence of chain pushbacks from Bulgaria to Turkey through Greece, the outsourcing of boat driving within pushbacks to people from the transit community, and transit groups being forced to jump into the river or becoming stranded on islands.

Meanwhile across squat locations in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina there was also notable presence of right wing groups and intimidation of people-on-the-move in April. The visit of an AFD delegation to the Una Sana Canton, continued police evictions of temporary sites, and vigilante patrols harassing squats in Serbia are just some of the examples recorded. The report also looks at camp situations across the region, including the conditions around Covid-19, the closure of Kara Tepe, and the roll-out of surveillance technologies in Greek centres. Together, these updates offer a grim insight into the way transit, reception and removals are being structured violently against people-on-the-move in the Balkans.

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

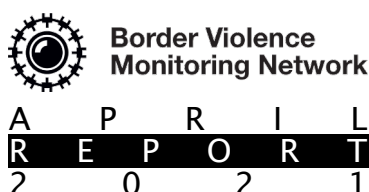


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Executive Summary**
- 3 General**
 - 3 Reporting network
 - 3 Methodology
 - 3 Terminology
 - 3 Abbreviations
- 4 Trends in Border Violence**
 - 4 Translation and linguistic violence
 - 5 Pushbacks near Romanian border crossings
 - 6 Border sites used in Albanian pushbacks
 - 7 Cycle of pushback violence in Evros region
- 8 Update on the Situation**
 - 8 Croatia
 - Court ruling for Madina's family
 - 9 Bosnia-Herzegovina
 - AfD delegation in Una Sana Canton
 - Police eviction of squats
 - Covid-19 conditions in family camps
 - 10 Serbia
 - Right wing groups harass squats
 - 11 Greece
 - Kara Tepe closure
 - Large pushbacks from Samos
 - Centaur system and surveillance in camps
- 13 Glossary of Reports, April 2021**
- 15 Network Structure and Contact**

GENERAL

REPORTING NETWORK

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

TERMINOLOGY

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

METHODOLOGY

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

ABBREVIATIONS

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

TRENDS IN BORDER VIOLENCE

TRANSLATION AND LINGUISTIC VIOLENCE

A lot of attention is understandably given to the use of physical abuse and torture during pushbacks. These acts are highly visible markers of what “violence” can mean for people-on-the-move at borders. However, they are often accompanied by a variety of other structural, material and psychological methods deployed by law enforcement. One of these, which is equally central to the execution of pushbacks, is the abuse of translation and the way linguistic violence is leveraged by officers when capturing, processing and removing transit groups.

“He was interrogated, his personal data, and his fingerprints were taken and he had to sign a paper that he did not understand as there was no translator present.” (24/01/21)

Cases recorded recently from Croatia and Slovenia (see [3.1](#)) show how police forces create gaps in communication by filing untranslated forms which signees cannot understand because they are in the national language. These administrative acts regularly lead to violent pushbacks, while physical abuse and intimidation is often mobilised to coerce people into signing documents. This bureaucracy, which includes the extraction of fines, acts as a ploy to give pushbacks a faux-legal appearance. But with pushbacks themselves being unlawful, these untranslated notices of removal, and the subsequent lack of legal remedy, are simply additional examples of where border policing is diverting from international law. However, it is also worth highlighting the shortcomings of the current [EU Directive on Returns](#), which already creates substantial grey areas within which member states can ignore or abridge access to translation.

Beyond these administrative abuses, police officers also embody linguistic violence through their practices during apprehension. Across multiple borders, testimonies provide a pattern of ad hoc translation engineered by police forces, who require group members conversant in English to act as interlocutors between officers and the wider transit group. For example in a case from April, Croatian officers forced a group member to write down the names of all other people and convert them into Latin alphabet (see [5.14](#)). Alongside identification, this outsourcing is also forced onto group members as a way of

conferring police orders, such as: to undress, hand over valuables or lie on the ground. In this way certain group members are isolated or coerced into mediating between the authorities and the rest of the transit group. In a [case from Romania](#), the respondent describes how the group member who could speak English was told by officers to transmit this message:

“If you have money or [a] mobile, put them here on the ground. If we find mobiles, we will beat you more.”

While groups are often forced to crudely assist in elements of their own pushback, language also operates as a grounds for violence from the perspective of perpetrating officers. Multiple accounts highlight the use of extreme violence against English speakers who are deemed to be engaged in smuggling transit groups. One illustrative case from [July 2020](#) encapsulates the ranges of linguistic violence groups and individuals face. The respondent was subject to mistranslations by

PLAČILNI NALOG

Izdan dne 22.03.2021 na podlagi 57. člena Zakona o prekrških (ZP-1, Ur. l. RS št. 7/03 s spremembami in dopolnitvami)

KRŠITELJ:

Ime: [redacted] Priimek: [redacted] Spol: [redacted] Datum rojstva: [redacted] Črta/izjavo:

Prekršek/večkratno pravno osebo:

Kraj: [redacted] Ulica: [redacted] Vrsta vozila: [redacted] Država: [redacted]

PODATKI O PREKRŠKU:

Datum: 01.03.2021 ob 06:00 Lokacija: PP ILIRSKA BISTRICA, HRIB STRANOVICA - VAVKOVEC, 54 KM MP STAROD - DLETO: 20 KM 14900 Reg. št. vozila: [redacted] Vrsta vozila: [redacted] Znamka vozila: [redacted] Tip vozila: [redacted] Vrsta udeležencev: [redacted]

Kršitev po predpisu: ZTUP-2 Člen Odstavek Točka Alinija Zveza Predpisana globa Kazenske točke

145 1 12 € 508.00

IZREČENA GLOBA / KAZENSKE TOČKE SKUPAJ: € 480.00

Kršitelj se ni bil predstavljen, storjen prekršek ni dokazil.

Opomba: Postopek vođen v jeziku, ki ga tuji razume - pašto (prevaljevali). Plačilni nalog je na podlagi 303. člena ZP-1 varšilni takoj.

Podpis: [redacted] Druzi marci dva tisoč enaindvajseti

Priloga: [redacted]

Penalty fine issued in Slovenia during a chain push-back (Source: [BVMN](#))

officials from two national authorities, who ignored his request for asylum during an interview in Trieste and a Slovenian police station. Then in the following chain pushback to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the respondent was abused by Croatian police who interpreted his ability to speak english as evidence he was “a leader” (or smuggler), and therefore reacted by carrying out a strip search of his body.

Similarly, in cases from both [Croatia](#) and [Romania](#), transit group members report being afraid to state that they speak english, for

fear of being viewed as a “guide”, and therefore excessively beaten because of their connection to smuggling. Yet for those who don't speak english there is no exemption from the violence. Group members pushed back from Romania and Croatia (see [5.11](#)) report being [attacked with batons](#) and [struck on the head](#) because they replied that they couldn't speak english. Linguistic violence functions through these abusive informal practices, overlapping with the web of bureaucratic powers which manipulate verbal and written communication in order to carry out pushbacks.

PUSHBACKS NEAR ROMANIAN BORDER CROSSINGS

Since autumn 2020, BVMN-members collecting testimonies in Serbia have witnessed a shift in the transit routes of people-on-the-move to the East of the country. An increasing number of people are now traveling from Serbia to Romania, a trend reflected in the number of pushback testimonies that were gathered in that border area.

In the month of April in particular, No Name Kitchen and Collective Aid collected several testimonies of pushbacks from Romania into Serbia. These testimonies highlight that the

pushbacks often take place in locations very close to Border Crossing Points (BCPs), which are the official transit points on the land border between the neighbouring countries. Most pushbacks are reported from the vicinity of two BCPs, the first being at Navokolunga.

In one such [testimony](#), the respondent claimed that authorities, which he referred to as “commandos” because of their uniforms, forced the transit group to sit in a small river only a few hundred meters away from the



Romanian Border Police detaining a transit group (Source: [Politia de Frontiera Romana](#))

BCP. The group were immersed in water for about two hours, suffering extreme cold, before being pushed back to Serbia. Just one day earlier [another violent pushback](#) occurred in the same area, intimating that the stretch of border next to the BCPs may be frequent points used for illegal returns. The second BCP noted in recent testimonies is Stamora Moravita–Vatin. Pushbacks (see [2.2](#)) were reported South of this crossing, mimicking the similar methods used at Navoko–Lunga.

This practice is noteworthy because it differs from the predominant practice of pushbacks at other borders where incidents mostly occur in forested or concealed areas along the green border. The clandestine nature of pushbacks, such as from HR–BiH, gives rise to the assumption that the offending authorities are making a concerted effort to conceal their activities. However, in the case of Romanian pushbacks, authorities seem to be using parallel areas of the border within close proximity to BCPs. A possible explanation is that Serbian police are often receiving groups at the border, and therefore respective forces

use the area around the BCPs to streamline the exchange of transit groups.

As to whether the officers carrying out these pushbacks are stationed out of the BCPs the evidence is not yet clear. Respondents noted multiple uniformed divisions involved, including various elements of Romanian border police dressed in camouflage and navy uniforms (see [2.5](#)). Additionally, [Frontex personnel](#) are also operating on this border in conjunction with national authorities. A [case](#) recorded from March, noted their alleged presence during the capture of a group, describing how the respondent:

“remembered the [blue] ‘Frontex armband’ as they had seen it on the uniforms of some officers at the Turkish and Bulgarian border.”

The group were caught and removed to Serbia close to the Navoko–Lunga BCP, suggesting that the practice of pushbacks near the official crossings is a pattern that is facilitated by multiple actors in the border area.

BORDER SITE USED IN ALBANIAN PUSHBACKS

Over the last three months, BVMN has witnessed some major developments in pushbacks from Albania to Greece. In the [February Report](#), mass-expulsions from the port town of Durrës were analysed. In connection with this evidence, the use of a camp-like site directly at the border with Greece also emerged as a new trend. Acting as a staging post for pushbacks to Greece, one [respondent](#) describes how:

“They [the authorities] just took us to that place and they drove us to the border”

This “small camp”, as described by respondents, was mentioned in six testimonies since January, which involved more than 250 people-on-the-move. The site, which functions as a temporary detention space, is reportedly located just 200 metres away from the border crossing at Kapshticë–Krystalopigi. It is described as consisting of a few containers, including shower facilities and a medical unit, with a small restaurant closeby. People-on-the-move report that they are brought to this site after apprehension, both from deep across the Albanian interior and in proximity to the border.

At this location, detainees describe being fingerprinted and asked for personal information by police, sometimes in the presence of a translator. Then, after a short stay of a few hours, they are loaded into vans or landrovers and brought back to Greece at an unmarked area of the green border. In some [testimonies](#), respondents also reported spending the night at the site, and were held inside containers that slept up to seven people.

In several testimonies the presence of [international personnel](#) and vehicles at the site was reported, which the respondents referred to as a Frontex presence. These reports correspond with the Agency’s current mission in Albania, but it is often difficult to document their role given the range of mobile tasks which officers carry out, including night-time surveillance. A report early this year from [Deutsche Welle](#) drew linkages between Frontex and the transfer of groups to the Albanian police prior to pushbacks. The sightings of officers matching their description in the Kapshticë site adds further weight to this theory, and raises further questions about Frontex’s covert role in border violence across the region.



Commissioner Johansson recently visited Frontex personnel in Albania
(Source: [Ylva Johansson](#))

CYCLE OF PUSHBACK VIOLENCE IN EVROS REGION

In April, testimonies collected by BVMN revealed continuation along several trends in pushbacks in the Evros region documented in the last months. In particular, testimonies highlight the continued occurrence of chain pushbacks from Bulgaria to Turkey through Greece, the outsourcing of boat driving within pushbacks to people from the transit community, and transit groups being forced to jump from dinghies half-way across the Evros, only to be stranded on Islands in a “no-man’s-land” caught between hostile authorities on both sides of the river. On the Turkish side, the situation also changed in the last month and now many of those apprehended by Turkish authorities after being pushed back from Greece are put in detention.

BVMN member project Josoor documented several incidents in April of pushbacks from Bulgaria, including both pushbacks directly to Turkey (see [8.1](#) & [8.2](#)), and chain pushbacks where transit groups were first pushed back to Greece before being apprehended by Greek authorities and pushed over the Evros (see [9.1](#)). In instances where transit groups were returned directly from Bulgaria, respondents describe Bulgarian authorities making them cross the border through informal “doors” or openings in the fence that runs along the Bulgarian/Turkish border (see [8.2](#)). In the context of chain pushbacks through Greece, respondents recalled being first apprehended and detained by Bulgarian authorities, before being expelled into Greece. From there, they were apprehended

by Greek authorities in the [tri-border region](#). Reports of apprehensions in Bulgaria followed trends observed in the last months, in that respondents reported being threatened or attacked by canine units in the moment of apprehension (see [9.1](#)).

Recent testimonies (see [7.5](#)), also mentioned the presence of third country nationals (TCN) employed by the Greek authorities at the moment of pushbacks at the Evros River. It was again suggested by respondents that TCNs, allegedly employed in some way by Greek authorities with the promise of papers to legalise their stay in Greece or some kind of work permit, are actively involved in pushbacks occurring at the Greek/Turkish Border.

Several testimonies this month also mentioned people being forced to jump into the middle of the Evros River while being ferried across (see [9.1](#)), or else being left on or near islands in the river. In one incident of which BVMN was able to collect several testimonies, a large group was left for several days on an island until rescued by the Turkish authorities. In two different instances (see [7.6](#) & [9.1](#)), there is also mention of group members drowning as a result of being forced to jump in the river, or being stranded on islands. While it is difficult at times to receive confirmation in such cases, in [one testimony](#) recorded this month, the respondent was able to identify the body of someone from the transit group that was suspected to have drowned, after news of the person’s death appeared in local media.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

CROATIA

COURT RULING FOR MADINA'S FAMILY

Croatia's [Constitutional Court issued a ruling](#) in April on the case of an Afghan family removed to Serbia, establishing that their asylum rights were violated and the family were exposed to the risk of inhumane abuse. The family were pushed back while still grieving the loss of their six year old daughter, Madina Hussiny, who was [killed by a train](#) during a previous pushback from Croatia in 2017. Having reentered Croatia in search of asylum, the bereaved family were again unlawfully removed to Serbia [the court found](#), and authorities:

“violated the human rights of the members of [the] family and exposed them to the risk of torture and ill-treatment”

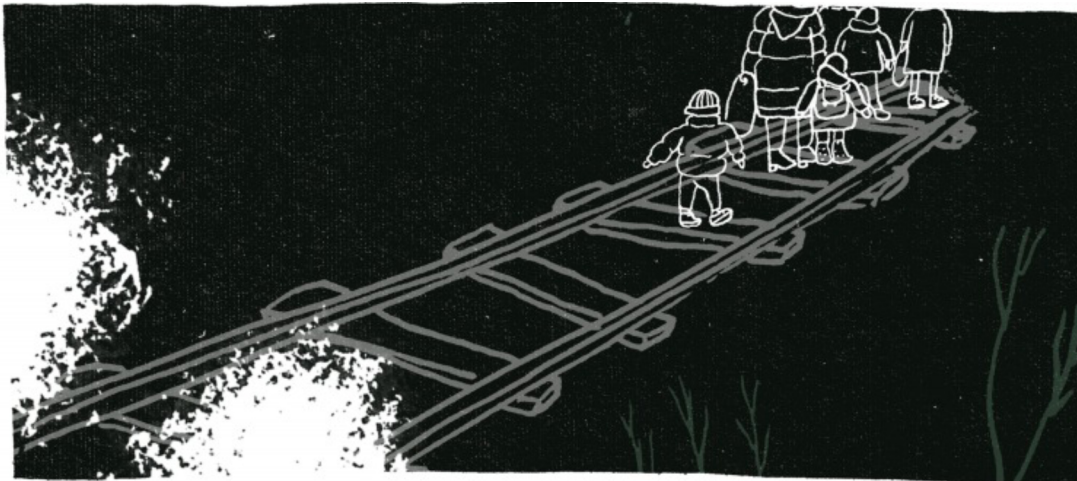
The judgement leveraged evidence from NGOs to prove that Serbia was not a “safe third country” to which the family could be returned. It asserted that Croatia had been in possession of this knowledge and yet had failed to make a proper assessment, in doing so violating the families rights. Notably the court also found that Croatian authorities had exposed the family to the risk of torture, which aligns with [data published recently by BVMN](#) which found that 87% of pushbacks from Croatia involved the use of torture, with over a third of these impacting groups with minors. Network member [Centre for Peace Studies](#) stated that the ruling is:

“significant for the protection of many other refugees and asylum seekers in

Croatia who do not have access to a remedy and who have been systematically denied access to international protection”.

Unfortunately the court findings remain detached from current national and EU approaches to migration, which continue to condone pushback violations at Croatia's borders. In April, [Commissioner Ylva Johansson visited Zagreb](#) and met with incumbent Prime Minister Andrej Plenković to discuss the New Pact on Migration and Croatia's candidacy for the Schengen Area. Despite numerous critical voices which have demanded Schengen Status be contingent on respect of fundamental rights, Croatia continues to make further strides towards membership.

In the Hussiny family's parallel fight for justice over the unlawful killing of their daughter, the case is currently being heard at the European Court for Human Rights (ECtHR). Perhaps the most galling element to this situation is that Madina's family are not the last to face such fatal risks at Croatia's borders. In April, reports taken by network member No Name Kitchen continued to highlight the Tovarnik-Sid railway line as an active pushback site, with another family of five (including children as young as 8 years old) being pushed back in the middle of the night to Serbia (see [4.2](#)). Transit communities and those acting in solidarity still await the alignment of these court rulings with the situation on the ground, though the latest judgment is a firm step in establishing this accountability.



Illustrated comic by Ena Jurov about the killing of Madina Hussiny (Source: [CMS](#))

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

AFD DELEGATION IN UNA SANA CANTON

In early March, several members of the fascist German AfD-party, some of whom are members of the Berlin parliament, went on a [trip to the Una Sana Canton](#) (BiH). Even though their visit was not sanctioned by the Federation's government, they were welcomed by the mayors of Bihać and Novi Grad and were able to visit the camp in Lipa. It appears that the Bosnian politicians' welcome was a nod towards the growing unrest amongst some locals to transit communities in the Canton, which had culminated in a [severe assault](#) in February this year, and [renewed protests](#) in cities like Bihać.

While, the AfD politicians' trip may appear similar to that of [German neo-Nazi vigilantes who had harassed refugees](#) in Greece last year, it is better understood as a stunt to shape the German political discourse around the safety of countries of origin and transit countries. In a YouTube video, Gunnar Lindemann, one of the AfD politicians, interviews two Pakistani men, emphasizing the fact that

Bosnia is a safe country, and feeding the right-wing narrative that people-on-the-move primarily seek to benefit from Europe's supposedly generous welfare systems. This trip needs to be seen in the context of Lindemann's recent visit to Damascus, during which he attempted to establish Syria as a safe and well-governed country, by making the case for German investments in the country.

Lindemann is not the only AfD politician to have travelled to Syria – in 2018 and 2019, AfD [members of the federal German parliament travelled to Syria](#) and demanded the commencement of deportations to the country. While such remains have not yet produced political majorities in Germany, Denmark is in the process of [ending residency status for Syrians](#) despite the ongoing hostilities in the country as well as the dangers faced by Syrian returning to areas under Assad's control.

POLICE EVICTION OF SQUATS

The Una Sana Canton government has again announced that it will increase control in the cities for the "safety" of the population, tightening controls on the transit community. In April, the Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) and Cantonal government said they would intensify operational activities, carrying out a series of evictions to shift people-on-the-move into camps. The first "relocation" began when the SFA inspected six abandoned structures in the city of Bihać and transported about a hundred people to the Lipa camp, which according to [Security Minister Selmo Cikotić](#) will be completed in three months to accommodate families and unaccompanied minors. On 18th April, the SFA – in cooperation with the border police and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – removed people from the area of Bosanska Bojna. The squats there, located next to the Croatian border, were evicted and nine families (including 43 people) were relocated to the temporary reception centres of Sedra and Borići.

On [22nd April](#), the citizens of Bihać gathered in front of the abandoned building in the centre of the city, the Dom Pensionera, where about 200 people-on-the-move live, to demand the closure of the squat and the transfer of the residents to Lipa camp. At the end

of April, again in cooperation with members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Una Sana Canton and IOM, the SFA coordinated the eviction of about eight families (32 people in total) from an abandoned house in Stari Grad, Velika Kladuša, transporting the families to the official camps. Most of the evacuated families left the camps after a few days to return to the abandoned houses to try further border crossings. This pattern of police evictions represents daily and unwarranted violence against internal movement of the transit community, and challenges their freedom to settle outside of the camps.



Bihać protest against transit communities in the city
(Source: [USKinfo.ba](#))

COVID-19 CONDITIONS IN FAMILY CAMPS

Both Borići Camp in the centre of Bihać, and Sedra Camp around 20 kilometres outside of the city, have had periods of lockdowns because of outbreaks of COVID-19 among residents and staff. Borići Camp was closed for just over [two weeks in March](#) when there were eight confirmed cases. No-one was allowed to enter or leave, meaning that those pushed back from Croatia had to find alternative accommodation. Some of these people were housed at Sedra Camp instead, which was in turn locked down for more than two weeks in April.

At Sedra Camp, returning families are placed in a separate part of the camp for a two week isolation period. They are required to stay in one room, away from other people. One family described that there is only cold water available for washing, and that no preventa-

tive or symptomatic treatments were offered, despite being requested.

The isolation area doubles as a space for both suspected COVID-19 cases and families returning from pushbacks, creating risk of transmission for those unaffected. One family required to quarantine after returning from Croatia reported that they were again confined to isolation following a suspected case from someone staying on the same floor as them, though no-one in the family had symptoms. A blood test was taken, but the family were not immediately informed of the results. Only two weeks later were they given confirmation that they had been tested as negative. These experiences reinforce the differentiated experience of COVID-19 for people-on-the-move, who face successive barriers to protection and treatment.

SERBIA

RIGHT WING GROUPS HARASS SQUATS

On 18th April 2021, several members of the far-right group Narodna Patrola ("National Patrol") approached the abandoned train wagons in Sombor (SRB), one of the main known squats of people-on-the-move in the town. The vigilante group forced the Afghan men who were there at the time to go with them to the Reception Center outside of the city. Upon arrival, the people-on-the-move were allegedly rejected by the camp authorities, who then also called the police. The officers detained four members of the Narodna Patrola and took them to the police station, where they stayed for several hours.

This incident was followed by a local protest against people-on-the-move, highlighting the rising climate of aggression towards transit communities in the area. According to a [local news portal](#), the protest involved over 100 people and continued to circulate around the city even after the arrested members of the patrol were released. One of the main chants being used was: "We don't want migrants here".

Arguing that police protect transit communities to the detriment of local people in Serbia, Narodna Patrola are one of the most active far-right groups in the country. Their presence online includes over 13,000 people in their Facebook group and over 40,000 likes on their main FB page alone (not including the regional branches). Most recently the group have been [encouraging "People's Patrols"](#) in different Serbian cities, especially in Belgrade and Sombor. This should be read in the context of a rising far-right anti-immigrant sentiment in the region that has manifested itself in instances of harassment of people-on-the-move by organised and ad-hoc local groups and individuals.

GREECE

KARA TEPE CLOSURE

On 24th April 2021, the Greek government announced that Kara Tepe, camp on Lesbos, would be closing. Managed by the Municipality of Mytilene and [UNHCR](#) in collaboration with the NGOs that operate there, and inhabited mainly by families and people considered particularly “vulnerable”, Kara Tepe existed as the best out of objectively all insufficient options when it came to housing in camps on Lesbos. Since 2017 and the adoption of the “hotspot” approach, thousands of people-on-the-move have been left stranded in inhumane and unsafe conditions on Lesbos until they completed their asylum procedure. With the closure of Kara Tepe, 400 asylum seekers and refugees previously housed there will be transferred to the temporary camp built in the aftermath of the September 2020 fire, Moria 2.0. The Greek government has already received [extensive criticism](#) for conditions in this camp, where over 7,000 people were forced to weather a winter in flimsy tents, at risk of frequent flooding, and with insufficient infrastructure for hygiene and food.

Maria Eliana Tunno, a psychologist who works for MSF on the island, said in a [state-ment](#) that “the absurdity of Lesbos seems to have no limits.” Instead of working towards creating dignified, safe housing options for those seeking asylum on Lesbos, the response of the state has been to “replicate the model of Moria camp”, and to move towards increasingly carceral approaches. In Moria 2.0, people can only leave the camp for a couple hours a week, are disconnected from the rest of society, and are forced to live in abysmal conditions.

At the same time, the construction of the new controlled and closed camps on the mainland is well underway. On the Aegean islands of Leros and Chios, local opposition to new sites remains strong. However, the tender of 13 million euros for the construction is published. On Lesbos, the camp, with a planned capacity of 3,000 people as a pre-detention site for 2,000 people, has been approved by local authorities; but the location remains unclear.



Flooding experienced over the winter in Moria 2.0 (Source: [Moria Corona Awareness Team](#))

LARGE PUSHBACK FROM SAMOS

On the morning of 21st April 2021, a boat carrying [32 people-on-the-move](#) landed on Psili Ammos Beach, on the Greek island of Samos, at around 06:30. Upon arrival, due to the fear of being apprehended by authorities and pushed back to Turkey, the group split up into several smaller groups that dispersed throughout the forest. Later in the day, local residents who had witnessed and spoken to one of the groups in the area of Marathokampos, Western Samos, informed both the police and coast guard of the new arrivals.

In the evening, local journalists in contact with the residents posted about the [boat landing](#) on social media. Reportedly, the police had located and arrested the majority of the 32 individuals who had arrived on Samos in the early hours of the morning. Conflictingly, the official line presented by port authorities soon after, and which locals were supposedly [encouraged to adopt](#), was that [‘no incident, no migrant was out neither in Psili Ammos nor in Votsalakia Marathokampos’](#).

The following day, the [Turkish Coast Guard](#) (TCG) published a statement on their website that “a raft with 28 people was located off Ephesus (Kuşadası) and in Turkish waters” at 03:55 in the night between 21st and 22nd April. It is very probable that the people found by the TCG were part of the group who arrived in Samos the day before and were [pushed back](#) by Greek authorities.

Five days later, on 26th April, [a mother and her three children arrived at the Samos RIC](#) and expressed their intention to seek asylum. According to their statement, they were among the 32 people who arrived on Samos on the 21st April – raising serious questions regarding the Greek authorities’ statement that there was no boat landing nor new arrivals. However, the mother’s statement and the locals’ testimonies give validity to the sequence of events that occurred on the 21st to 22nd of April, evidencing the mass pushback of the other 28 people to Turkey.

CENTAUR SYSTEM AND SURVEILLANCE IN CAMPS

According to [AlgorithmWatch](#), Greece plans the introduction of a comprehensive surveillance system in the camps on the Aegean islands. The system, called Centaur, will integrate “CCTV system and video monitors, drone flights over the facilities to detect incidents, perimeter violation alarms with cameras, control gates with metal detectors and x-ray devices and an automated system for public announcements”. Centaur is entirely funded by the European Union through its Internal Security Fund and Recovery Fund.

Disturbingly, there is a stark mismatch between the EU Commission’s public assurances that the new camps on the Greek islands will not be “closed” and the way in which the EU enables creation of de facto detention centers through technology funding. In recent years, the EU has increasingly resorted to funding advanced technologies, ranging from [drones overflying border areas and camps](#) to [“lie detectors”](#) – to securitise its borders and detect people-on-the-move. This technologisation appears to strike a compromise between civil liberties of EU citizens and their “need” for security, as these advanced technologies appear (at least physically) less intrusive than traditional security

hardware. However, this is a false promise. Such technologies fundamentally undermine the data protection rights under the GDPR of people-on-the-move, thereby threatening the rule of law. Additionally, surveillance technology can easily be integrated into “regular” police work, also undermining the civil liberties of European citizens.

GLOSSARY OF REPORTS, APRIL 2021

BVMN recorded 42 pushback cases in March, impacting 1125 people-on-the-move. Those affected by these incidents included men, women, children with guardians and unaccompanied children. They also represent a wide demographic, including people from Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Bangladesh, Cuba, Algeria, Palestine, Yemen & Jordan.

-11 pushbacks to Serbia (2 chain from Slovenia, 2 from Croatia, 2 from Hungary, and 5 from Romania)
 -19 pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina (direct from Croatia)
 -1 pushback to Greece (direct from North Macedonia)
 -11 pushbacks to Turkey (1 chain from Bulgaria, 2 direct from Bulgaria, 8 from Greece)

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
HUNGARY TO SERBIA				
1.1	2nd April	13th April	20	Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco
1.2	18th April	20th April	3	Morocco, Afghanistan
ROMANIA TO SERBIA				
2.1	21st January	22nd January	30	Afghanistan
2.2	1st April	3rd April	7	Afghanistan
2.3	11th April	21st April	5	Afghanistan
2.4	8th April	20th April	5	Afghanistan, Pakistan
2.5	21st April	22nd April	15	Afghanistan
SLOVENIA TO SERBIA				
3.1	24th March	28th March	4	Pakistan
3.2	8th April	30th April	3	Afghanistan, Pakistan
CROATIA TO SERBIA				
4.1	23rd February	25th February	20	Afghanistan
4.2	3rd April	7th April	7	Afghanistan, Syria, Tunisia
CROATIA TO BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
5.1	24th February	25th March	4	Afghanistan
5.2	25th February	7th April	5	Afghanistan, Iran, Tunisia
5.3	2nd March	13th March	7	Afghanistan
5.4	5th March	20th April	12	Pakistan, Bangladesh
5.5	10th March	25th April	11	Pakistan
5.6	11th March	25th March	7	Afghanistan
5.7	11th March	13th March	7	Afghanistan
5.8	1st April	27th April	12	Afghanistan
5.9	1st April	3rd April	20	Iran, Iraq
5.10	2nd April	5th April	20	Afghanistan
5.11	2nd April	21st April	90	Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh
5.12	3rd April	4th April	60	Afghanistan
5.13	3rd April	7th April	18	Afghanistan
5.14	4th April	6th April	22	Afghanistan
5.15	4th April	7th April	9	Afghanistan, Iraq

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
5.16	8th April	11th April	15	Afghanistan, Pakistan
5.17	12th April	12th April	3	Afghanistan
5.18	25th April	26th April	7	Afghanistan
5.19	27th April	29th April	11	Cuba, Iran
NORTH MACEDONIA TO GREECE				
6.1	10th April	12th April	4	Morocco, Algeria
GREECE TO TURKEY				
7.1	1st April	5th April	80	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia
7.2	2nd April	3rd April	100	Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria, Tunisia
7.3	5th April	6th April	40	Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt
7.4	7th April	8th April	147	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria
7.5	8th April	3rd May	9	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Jordan
7.6	10th April	13th April	120	Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia
7.7	24th April	25th April	80	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Jordan
7.8	26th April	28th April	40	Palestine, Syria, Egypt
BULGARIA TO TURKEY				
8.1	3rd April	1st May	2	Tunisia
8.2	13th April	14th April	9	Syria
BULGARIA (VIA GREECE) TO TURKEY				
9.1	5th April	6th April	35	Pakistan, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt
FIND ALL REPORTS ON THE DATABASE HERE				

NETWORK STRUCTURE AND CONTACT

B	O	R	D	E	R
V	I	O	L	E	N
M	O	N	I	T	O
N	E	T	W	O	R

BVMN is based on the horizontal participation of member organisations in the field of documentation, advocacy, media and litigation. The Network receives funds through charitable grants and donations from supporters. The funds primarily cover transport subsidies for volunteers in the field and staff costs.

To follow more from the Border Violence Monitoring Network, check out our [website](#) for the entire testimony archive, previous monthly reports and regular news pieces. To follow us on social media, find us on Twitter handle [@Border Violence](#) and on [Facebook](#). For further information regarding this report or more on how to become involved please email us at mail@borderviolence.eu. For press and media requests please contact: press@borderviolence.eu



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**