

Press Release: Launch of Report on Borders & COVID-19

12th May 2020



The Border Violence Monitoring Network¹, an alliance of groups documenting pushbacks in the Balkan Region and Greece, are publishing a feature report on the intersection of the current health crisis and border management. This new publication shares first hand testimony of people-on-the-move who are experiencing the COVID-19 lockdown in transit. Its scope looks at the way restrictive measures disproportionately affect vulnerable persons in camps and at borders. Further, analysis of various countries from the region shows how COVID-19 measures have also been utilised to shape and erode the fundamental rights of these communities. Approaching the topic of COVID-19 as a period used to stage rights suspensions, some of the developments explored in this report include:

-The deployment of military forces at borders and camps is a core feature of the securitised response to COVID-19. This was seen with proposals made by the Slovenian government to increase the army's remit in the border area and the garrisoning of camps in Serbia.

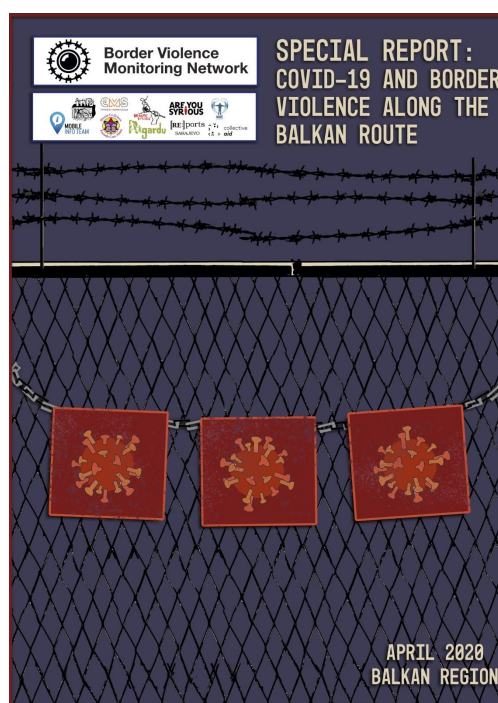
-The development of pushback practice in countries such as Croatia has shown a disturbing turn. Augmentation of border violence as a result of the pandemic appeared with the crude paint tagging of transit groups near Velika Kladusa. Meanwhile two officers actively involved in pushbacks in the Topusko area were tested positive for COVID-19, putting people-on-the-move at direct risk of contracting the virus at the hand of perpetrating officers..

-Collective expulsions from camps has rapidly become a new concern for people in centres in Greece and Serbia. The lockdown measures were used on multiple occasions as an excuse to perform large scale pushbacks from inner city camps and centres hosting asylum seekers.

-Inadequate accommodation facilities are an ongoing concern for transit groups denied the basic means to exercise relevant health protocols. Across the Balkan Route and Greece, the sealing of centres marked disproportionate deprivations of liberty and wilful neglect of hygienic standards by states and the European Union.

These findings point to the sharpening of inequality for people-on-the-move, whose access to asylum, healthcare, adequate accommodation, and safety from brutal collective expulsions has decreased rapidly during the COVID-19 restrictions. To find out more, read the full report [here](#). If you have any questions regarding this release and would like further information contact:

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¹BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in Greece and the Western Balkans including No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, Wave Thessaloniki, InfoKolpa, Escuela con Alma, Centre for Peace Studies, Mare Liberum, InfoPark, Collective Aid and Fresh Response.