

08/03/2020

"IT'S ONLY A BIG GAME"

Date and time: March 8, 2020 00:00

Location: Pazarkule BCP (TUR)

Coordinates: 41.653567053141686, 26.488697159015263

Demographics: 1 person(s), age: 22 , from: Algeria

Minors involved? No

Violence used: beating (with batons/hands/other), water immersion

Police involved: Greek authorities (armed with water cannons, assault rifles with rubber bullets and tear gas launchers). Turkish army and police, with jeeps and large military vehicles

Taken to a police station?: no

Was the intention to ask for asylum expressed?: No

Reported by: Balkan Info Van

ORIGINAL REPORT

The respondent, a young man from Algeria, arrived to the Pazarkule border crossing one week ago, having received the information that the border was open. He describes the living conditions in the camp as very poor. There is not enough basic supply, the queues to get a meal are very long (waiting time according to him between 2-3 hours), and there is not enough for everyone. Apart from that, there is no possibility to charge phones as *"the electricity has been cut"*.

According to the respondent, the worst thing about the informal camp is the permanent exposure to tear gas that is always in the air causing breathing problems. The respondent states that at nighttime there is an increase of gas all over the area, which makes it hard to sleep. He stresses in particular that he sees many children at the camp that are exposed to the gas 24/7 as they cannot leave the place.

To get some supplies and charge phones he says that people are trying to leave the camp towards the closest village Karaağaç. But getting out has become very hard, as *"they don't want anyone to get out"*. He describes that from 4th March on, the Turkish authorities are trying to prevent people from leaving the informal campsite at the border crossing. On that same day, he describes Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylyu visiting the site. But

against his expectations, *“he didn’t do anything, he just made sure the situation is under control”*, leading the respondent to the impression that:

“It’s only a big game.”

From 5th march on, the Turkish Army has been observed at the camp, using violence against people that try to get out of the camp.

“They are beating some young men”

The only way to leave the area is to get on one of the busses provided by Turkish authorities that allegedly bring people back to Istanbul, but the respondent is not sure where they actually go, according to him some people say they drive people to other parts of the border to force them to cross into Greece.

In the evening of 8th March, when the respondent tried to walk back to the camp from Karağağaç where he came to *“stay away from tear gas”*, he and four other young men got stopped by what he described as Turkish police. They were forced into a minivan, not knowing where they were taken. He assumed they were trying to drive towards Istanbul. They managed to escape close to the camp and walk back.

The respondent states that there are no journalists in the camp or close to the camp allowed from 4th March onwards.

“The police do not let the press enter.”

He observed two reporters in the camp that have been taken out of the camp by Turkish authorities on Saturday 7th March.



