

Violence Reports

documented by Rigardu team members
at the Serbian-Croatian border

Report on the increasing violence on refugees at the Croatian border

Since April 2017 our organization is working at the Serbian-Croatian border providing humanitarian aid. Beginning in May we have been facing an **increasing violence towards the refugees at the borders**. Their descriptions of attempted border crossings have changed dramatically. At the beginning of our work, refugees reported that the police in Croatia was comparatively humane, they would merely drive the people back to the border and release them on the Serbian side. Since the middle of May we have seen more and more people **coming back from the border with strong injuries**. In the following days people continuously came to us, showing new bodily harms. We began to document and record them. For that purpose, we are using a guideline from the organization "Fresh Response", which had taken over this important work in Subotica, at the Hungarian-Serbian border, since last winter.

Our documented cases reinforce the suspicions of observers on the ground, that these attacks are part of a systematic deterrence strategy. The fear of becoming a victim of violence is supposed to deter people attempting a border crossing and to destroy their hope of success.

According to the *UNHCR* Serbia report [1] 372 people which were temporarily residing on Serbian territory (reported in May 2017) were denied the right to seek international protection, i.e. asylum, in the Republic of Croatia, compared to 262 in April. Regarding the *UNHCR* weekly reports, **there is an increasing rate in "push-backs" to Serbia**.

Comparing the week of 7th May until 15th with 64 recorded push backs, the numbers are doubled the following week where 137 group-push-backs were mentioned. In the *UNHCR* Serbia report for the week from 15 to 21 May 2017, they stressed **"disproportionate use of force" by Croatian authorities during group expulsions**. Concerning the article of *Are You Syrious?* [2], who are also working on the issue of increasing border violence, *Doctors without Borders* warned of a recent **"dramatic increase in violence"**, always referring to the same patterns we've been documenting, with police "hitting with batons, destroying cell phones, snatching money".

Following you will find our documentation of cases recorded in Šid in between **May 31 and July 13**.

[1] Inter Agency Operational Update Serbia May 2017 -<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58266>

[2] <https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/ays-daily-digest-18-6-2017-conditions-in-swedish-detention-centres-deteriorating-9c6f5c08a465>

Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	31.05.17, 5 am, 15 minutes
Place / Ort	Next to the train tracks, 200m on the Croatian side
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	4
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	North Africa
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	5 (in uniforms)
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beating (with hands, feets, wooden sticks), Swearing („Fuck your mother“, „fuck your sister“)
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) / Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)
31.05.17 a group of 4 refugees from North Africa were beaten up by the police. It happened at 5 a.m. The police of Croatia found them at the border next to the train tracks just 200m on the Croatian side. The police was there with two cars, one small police car (Chevrolet) and one blue prisonvan. Before the guys had to go into the car, one police guy slapped one of the refugees in the face. After the four guys had to go into the prisonvan, in total there were 5 police guys in uniform, they drove to the border and put one by one out of the car and beat them with hands, feet and

wooden sticks. The police said something like "Fuck your mother" "Fuck your sister". The process took around 15 min. during this time there was no Serbian police.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	02.06.17
Place / Ort	Croatia, village 30km behind the border
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	10
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	Afghani, three people under age
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	10 (8 with uniforms, 2 without)
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beating (with fists, feet, baton)
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	No, but the police asked if anybody wanted to apply for asylum (nobody answered).

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Police checked mobile phones for English messages. They destroyed these phones and threw them away. One of the victims was beaten so hard that he couldn't hear on one ear.

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) / Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)
2. June 2017 10 people from Afghanistan, 3 of them under age were caught in a village in Croatia. They don't know the name of the village which was located 30km behind the border.

2 police officers found them on the road. The refugees tried to run away. The police increased its forces. 3 more police cars with 8 police officers showed up. In total 10 police guys. 8 were wearing uniforms, 2 without uniform but they came in a police car as well.

This time the police beat the refugees in the village and not at the border. They used fist, feet and police stick. (not a stick from the tree)

They beat everyone of the group. The police asked: "Where are you from? Who speaks English? Who wants asylum?" Nobody answered. They took the mobile phones and checked them. 2 of the refugees had messages in English on their phones. The police destroyed this phones and threw them away.

After they beat up everyone, the refugees had to go in a with van with no police sign on it. They drove them to the boarder and let them out. At the border was no Serbian police.

One of the police guys without uniform had a small scarf on his left forehead.

The guy I spoke with is 17 years old. The police hit him on his shoulder, back and head. When I met him he had pain on his left ear and could not hear.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	02.06.2017, 5:30 pm
Place / Ort	Tovarnik (Croatian village close to the Serbian border), 45°08'52.4"N 19°09'47.4"E
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	4
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	Algerian, 2 people under age (one of them has asthma)
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	10-11
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beating (with batons), kicking (in the head), dragging across the ground, taking pictures
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Kicking in the head until consciousness was lost. Name of this victim is reported. Some policemen hid their faces with masks.

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) / Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)
2. June 2017, 5:30pm 4 people from Algeria, 2 of them under age, were caught in Tovarnik, a Croatian village close to the border to Serbia. They went in a train container and as there wasn't a lot of space and it was really hot inside, two of them passed out. The police found them at a border control and 5 police

men carried them in a police car to a place near the rails next to the border (exact location: 45°08'52.4"N 19°09'47.4"E). They called for backup and so 5 or 6 more policemen in uniform, but hiding their faces with masks, arrived. They were taking photos of the 4 victims, but they didn't ask anything.

The first victim who was beaten up is called M.A., a 17 years old Algerian. The police men caught him at his ankles, dragged him over the ground (that's why he got some injuries in his back), beat him with police sticks and kicked him with their feet on his head. He completely lost his consciousness.

The other 3 victims only got small kicks and then the policemen drove away. They had 2 vans and a car.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	11.06.17, 10am-1pm
Place / Ort	Location found: Croatian customs Tovarnik Location of violence: 45.157008,19.171075 (Electricity building, Croatia)
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	6
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	Algeria, 3 minors
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	10
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beating (punches to the face, beating with batons in torso, head and legs, hitting the head with the butt of a gun, kicking with boots), tasering, shining light in the eyes, taking valuables (money, mobile phones)
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Systematic violence, brutality, tasering, people losing consciousness, police wearing balaclavas, minors involved

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) /
Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)

11/06/17. 10am-1pm

Location found - Croatian customs Tovarnik

Location of violence - 45.157008,19.171075

(Electricity building, Croatia)

6 males from Algeria (3 minors, 16 & 17 years old, and 3 adults) were in a train container heading to Slovenia when it was intercepted by police at the Croatian customs in Tovarnik. There were 10 police present when the group was found inside. 3 members of the Algerian group attempted to run and were individually tasered in the abdomen and buttocks. They made the whole group sit on the ground to await another police van which transported them to the electricity building. Whilst waiting they asked the group for documents and the group said they had none. They were asked where they were going and they answered Slovenia. The response from the police was that Slovenia was closed and that they must go back. The group told the police they were not refugees but migrants. 2 vans took the group to the building, one for the 10 police and one for the Algerians. Upon arrival the police, now all wearing balaclavas to disguise their faces, took each person out of the van, and one by one started to beat them. First, they used lights to shine in their eyes and 4 police attacked each person, starting with punches to the face (police wearing combat gloves) and then batons were used to beat repeatedly the guys in the torso, head and legs. The police had metal toe caps in their boots and they kicked people repeatedly on the floor. Some people lost consciousness. 3 people, including 2 minors, were hit on the back of the head numerous times with the butt of a large gun. The police took all valuable items from the group including mobile phones and considerable quantities of money (300, 500, 700 Euro from 3 members of group). After this the group was told to go back to Serbia and they did independently.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	28. 06. 2017, nighttime
Place / Ort	Serbian-Croatian border
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	4
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	20 years old, Afghanistan
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	-
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Throwing sticks at persons
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	-

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Person fainted after police was throwing stick at him, got infection in whole leg, which caused fever and pain

Have we got pictures? / Gibt es Bilder?	yes
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Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) /
Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)

On June 28, a 20 year old man from Afghanistan and 3 more persons went to a container in Sid. When the police opened the container at the border they tried to run away, but one police man threw a stick at one of the persons so that he fell down and fainted. After 40 minutes he woke up because the policemen were throwing water in his face. His friend asked for going to the hospital but the policemen denied and drove the injured person back to the "jungle", because he couldn't walk anymore. The others had to walk back on their own. On July 4 he had to go to the doctor because he got fever and the wounds got infected which caused pain in his whole leg and feet. He had to register for the camp for hygienic reasons.

The injured person was very confused during the interview and couldn't remember all the details, but in his opinion it was the Serbian police.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	04.07.2017 / 11:30am
Place / Ort	Tovarnik, Croatia
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	9
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	4 Algerians, 1 Afghani (minor), 4 Pakistani
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	7, Croatian border police
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beating with police sticks, sticks from trees and fists / Forced people to stand up again if they had fallen down to beat them again
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	-

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Detailed description of policemen: „Croatian border police in blue uniform. One of the police guys had a star on the shoulder and a “V” under it. Another police officer was fat and tall and wearing

gloves. A third police guy had an undercut (just hair on top of the head) and was wearing glasses.”

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) /
Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)

Tuesday 04.07.2017

4 Algerians, 1 Afghani under age and 4 Pakistanis were caught at 11:30 a.m. at the Croatian border at Trovanik. The guys were hiding in the train. 7 police guys, all from the Croatian border police in blue uniform. One of the police guys had a star on the shoulder and a “V” under it. Another police officer was fat and tall and wearing gloves. A third police guy had an undercut (just hair on top of the head) and was wearing glasses.

They had to go in a with van and were drove back to the boarder. The police man was driving really fast with the car and just for shocking applies the brakes. They had to go out of the car one by one. The Refugees had to stand in the middle and 7 police guys beat them up. Some police guys were using police sticks, some from the tree, other fist. When people fell down from the beating the police guys put them up and beat them again. The police was just asking for nationalities.

Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	7.7.2017, 2 am
Place / Ort	Caught at Vukovar, Croatia, beating happened 3km away from Sid railway station
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	1 man
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	Man from Algeria
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	-
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Kicked with feet and beat with police sticks while he was laying on the ground, Hematomas on back, contusion at kneecap
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	-

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Left him where they beat him, he had difficulties to walk back

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) /
Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)

7th July 2017, 2am

One Algerian, who we met 4 hours before this happened really drunk at food distribution, was caught by police near to the Croatian town Vukovar. He went in a truck when 2 Croatian police men in uniform found him. They took him in a police car to the Serbian border, 3 km away from the Sid train station. There, the police officers put him out of the car, asked him where he comes from and then they started to beat him up with his feet and police sticks. The victim was laying on the ground the whole time. He got really bad hematomas on his back with two marks from the police sticks. They also beat his knee and he got big contusions at his kneecap. It might be removed or at least some legitimates might got hurt because the knee was quite swollen. Then they just let him there and it was really hard for him to walk bad because his knee hurt so much.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	10.07. 2017, around midnight, 10 minutes
Place / Ort	Close to the train tracks, close to a small electricity house
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	4
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	men
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	3
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beating, shouting
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	-

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Beating continued after person was already laying on the ground

Have we got pictures? / Gibt es Bilder?	yes
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Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) /
Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)

10.07.2017

4 persons went to Croatia. When they were close to the train tracks, 2 police men (Croatian border police) arrived in a white, big van and forced them to get into their car. They drove them back to the border. When they stopped at a small electricity house, a third police men joined them. All were strong, tall men and wearing blue shirts. They hit the persons one by one with sticks and by feet and shouted "go back to Serbia!", "don't speak". The treatment took around 10 minutes, after that the police men tried to take pictures and took away a watch of one of the refugees. One of them wasn't able to run away, but his friends did. The Police came back and beat him again, although he was already laying on the ground. Bloody wounds in the face and his back and shoulders were deeply wounded. His friends came back to help him getting away from the location.



Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	12.07.2017, nighttime
Place / Ort	Found in small city near Zagreb, were driven close to Sombor (Serbia)
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	5
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	Men from North Africa
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	4 or 5, 2 during beating
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beaten with police sticks
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	no

Peculiarities (details you would consider relevant for a public report) / Besonderheiten, Auffälligkeiten (Dinge, die du für eine Berichterstattung relevant findest)
Asked about origin, name, age

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) /
Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)

12.07.2017, Wednesday

Wednesday night 5 people from North Africa were beaten up by the border police. The police found the guys in a small city close to Zagreb. There were 4 or 5 police officers which asked "Where are you from?" "How old are you?" "What are your names?" Nobody was speaking about asylum.

They drove them to the northern border in a blue police van without windows. They stopped in the forest close to Somber. At this time there have been just two border police guys. One by one had to go out of the car and were hit with police sticks.

Report about Police Violence / Bericht über Polizeigewalt

Date, time, duration / Datum, Zeitpunkt, Dauer	13.7.2017, 2 am
Place / Ort	Granični prijelaz Bajakovo, A3, 32246, Lipovac, Croatia
Number of people involved / Anzahl der betroffenen Personen	2
Details concerning the people (ethnicity, age, gender, e.g.) / Details über die betroffenen Personen (z. B. Herkunft, Alter, Geschlecht)	Men, Pakistan
Number of policemen involved / Anzahl der beteiligten Polizist*innen	5
Type of violence used / Form des Übergriffs, der Gewalttätigkeit	Beat one with fist in his mouth, kicked in stomach shouted "Go back to Serbia!"
Did anybody express the intention to ask for asylum when this happened? / Hat jemand in der Situation den Willen geäußert, Asyl zu beantragen?	-

Original Report (as it was sent to Rigardu) / Originalbericht (wie er an Rigardu geschickt wurde)
13. July 2017, 2 am 2 guys from Pakistan crossed the border in the container of a truck. There was a police control at this location where they got caught: https://www.google.rs/maps/place/Grani%C4%8Dni+prijelaz+Bajakovo/@45.0480481,19.0960762,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x475b8878cc1b5e7d:0xfa364569c7337466!8m2!3d45.0480481!4d19.0982702?hl=de

There were 2 Croatian police men in uniform taking them out of the truck, then 3 more came. They beat A. with a fist at his mouth. Now he has chapped lips (photo). And then they kicked him with a foot in his stomach and shouted at him "Go back to Serbia". Then they let him and his friend go. His friend was not beaten up.



We started publishing our documented cases in June

- <http://rigardu.de/en/2017/06/18/a-human-is-not-a-football-police-violence-at-the-serbian-croatian-border/>

In the following days *Are You Syrious?* and *Welcome Initiative*, who are also collecting reports on this issue, shared our information.

- <https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/ays-daily-digest-18-6-2017-conditions-in-swedish-detention-centres-deteriorating-9c6f5c08a465>
- <http://welcome.cms.hr/index.php/hr/2017/06/24/eu-se-utvrduje-i-govori-o-sigurnosti-dok-njezine-clanice-prodaju-oruzje-koje-doprinosi-odrzavanju-sukoba-na-bliskom-istoku/>

You can also find an article by *BalkanInsight* concerning our documentation.

- <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ngo-claims-croatian-police-continues-to-beat-refugees-06-27-2017>

Our aim is to raise awareness of the situation of refugees especially at the Serbian-Croatian border by spreading our information about these mentioned cases of violence. If you are interested in sharing the published information, you are welcome to message us at: mail@rigardu.de