

## Evidence of systematic police violence against refugees at external borders of EU

In the run-up to Human Rights day on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, German organization Rigardu is releasing an extensive report of illegal push-backs and police violence against refugees and migrants at the borders of the European Union with Serbia.

By means of photos and witness reports the organization is able to provide proof of more than 110 cases in which Croatian and Hungarian police illegally deported refugees to Serbia in 2017 alone. At least 857 people including many under-aged have suffered beating, kicking, electric shocks and even dog bites, were deprived of their belongings including their clothes, and forced to wait for hours at below-zero temperatures. The first in-depth documentation of individual cases shows to what extent illegal push-backs accompanied by police violence have become daily fare on the mentioned EU borders. With many occurrences undocumented, the actual number of cases is likely to be much higher.

In cooperation with other aid agencies, such as MSF (Médecins Sans Frontière / Doctors Without Borders) and UNHCR, Rigardu is systematically documenting such incidents, especially in the hotspots of Šid (Serbo-Croatian border) and Subotica (Serbo-Hungarian border).

**Reports are being collected in a continuously growing database: [www.borderviolence.eu](http://www.borderviolence.eu)**

“Human Rights are suspended at this border: When the refugees are caught in Croatia, the police drives them back to the border in a van. There, one after the other has to get out of the vehicle. The Croatian policemen beat up every one of them. They will stop at no body part or age group. They destroy mobile phones, steal cash and cut up shoes”, says Martin Deppert, who coordinated one of Rigardu’s projects in Šid, Serbia for several months. While providing help on the ground, volunteers of the organization have started to notice the rising levels of violence. The regularity of the incidents and similarity in procedures allow no conclusion other than that this is a deliberate and systematic line of action of the responsible authorities and supported by political decision-makers.

Push-Backs and police violence violate international law, in particular the Geneva Convention, The European Charter of Human Rights and, essentially, Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Rigardu as an actor of civil society calls on the responsible state actors – especially in Croatia and Hungary, but also in Serbia – to bring violence against refugees and migrants, illegal push-backs and the denial of the right to asylum to an end. Responsibility for these direct consequences of the European politics of isolation lies also with the political players of the European Union and the governments of all member states.

The Croatian Ministry of Interior took notice of a first report, published in July 2017 [1], but denied all allegations in an interview [2]. Other organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders note the

human rights violations by officials of EU member states as well [3]. The newly released documentation renders visible the systematic character of the violence perpetrated by Croatian and Hungarian border police. In face of the overwhelming evidence, these allegations can now no longer be denied.

*Rigardu is a non-profit organization based in Germany which has been supporting refugees on the so-called "Balkan Route" since 2015. Currently, volunteers provide mobile showers and drinking water in Subotica (Serbia) at the border to Hungary. More information at [www.rigardu.de](http://www.rigardu.de).*

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[1] [http://rigardu.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rigardu\\_report\\_may\\_july.pdf](http://rigardu.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rigardu_report_may_july.pdf)

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

[3] [Report] <http://www.msf.org/sites/msf.org/files/serbia-games-of-violence-3.10.17.pdf> and [Video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTMwjsMGD1s&t=10s%3F>