



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
PROTECTOR OF CITIZENS
281-60/16
Belgrade

Ref. No. Date:



Заштитник грађана
Zaštitnik građana



БЕОГРАДСКИ ЦЕНТАР
ЗА ЛЈУДСКА ПРАВА

NATIONAL PREVENTIVE MECHANISM

MONITORING OF THE TREATMENT OF MIGRANTS/ASYLUM SEEKERS

Report on the Visit to Informal Venues in Belgrade at Which Refugees and Migrants Have Been Rallying

Belgrade, July 2016

MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE VISIT

VISITED LOCATION	Luka Đelović Park (at Belgrade University College of Economy) and St. Nikola Square (at the main Belgrade Bus Station Arrivals Gate)
PURPOSE OF THE VISIT	Monitoring of the treatment of migrants/asylum seekers
VISIT CONDUCTED BY	Protector of Citizens, in cooperation with the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
DATE OF VISIT	22 July 2016
VISIT TEAM	Team Members: Marko Anojčić, <i>Professional Service of the Protector of Citizens/NPM</i> Jelena Samardžić, <i>Professional Service of the Protector of Citizens/NPM</i> Nikolina Milić <i>Belgrade Centre for Human Rights</i> Marko Štambuk, <i>Belgrade Centre for Human Rights</i>

1. Introduction

On 22 July 2016, around 400 migrants, mostly nationals of Afghanistan and Pakistan, launched a hunger strike near the main Belgrade Bus Station, in protest against the Hungarian authorities' decision to close their borders to migrants. After the strike ended several hours later, a group of around 150 migrants headed on foot down the highway towards the Serbian-Hungarian border, with the intention of continuing their protest there. The NPM Team interviewed the migrants who stayed near the Arrivals Gate of the Belgrade Bus Station and the College of Economy.



2. Conditions

At the time of its visit, the NPM Team saw around 80 migrants at the open air venues. A mobile first-aid trailer was parked in the park near the Arrivals Gate of the Belgrade Bus Station (St. Nikola Square) and food and beverages were distributed by humanitarian organisations. Representatives of a number of non-government organisations, both domestic and international, have been in the field, extending, with the help of interpreters, various forms of aid to the migrants and refugees, as well as information on the asylum procedure and other information they may find useful. Plain clothes policemen were also present in the park.

Together with the Serbian Orthodox Church charity *Čovekoljublje* and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), representatives of the organisation Info Park have been distributing lunch to refugees and migrants in the parks near the main Belgrade Bus and Railway stations. In addition, Caritas has been distributing pastry to them every morning. The families can also have breakfast at *Miksalište*. Dinner is provided by Refugee Aid Serbia.

3. Healthcare

The refugees and migrants have access to medical aid, provided free of charge by doctors of the following organisations: Danish Refugee Council (DRC)-UNHCR, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Médecins du Monde (MDM), Real Medicine Foundation (RMF), as well as the Balkan Centre for Migration (BCM). The Danish Refugee Council and UNHCR medical teams are on duty 12 hours a day, from 7 am to 7 pm. The medications are provided by UNHCR; the required supplies are delivered once or twice a week, depending on the needs. The paramedics are called in case refugees are in need of additional aid, or they are transported by the Real Medicine Foundation (RMF) to the Belgrade Urgent Medical Centre. The doctors treat between 60 and 70 people every day on average; the refugees mostly complain of colds, respiratory infections, exhaustion and similar health problems caused by their long journey and nights spent in open air. Around 20 migrants asked to see the doctor on the day of the NPM Team's visit. The doctors and the migrants communicate with the help of Info Centre's interpreters.

4. Interviews with Migrants

The NPM Team interviewed around 10 migrants, none of whom complained about the way they were treated by the Serbian authorities. They did, however, complain about the treatment they had been subjected to by the Hungarian and Bulgarian police.



An Afghani national, who had taken part in the protest, told the NPM Team he had gone on the hunger strike because Hungary had closed its borders. He said he had come to Serbia from Bulgaria with another 20 people about two months ago. He had been detained in a camp in Burgas, Bulgaria, where many migrants were harassed by the Bulgarian authorities. He went through the registration, fingerprinting and photographing procedure when he entered Serbia. About a week ago, he and a group of other migrants were prevented from entering Hungary by the Hungarian border police, which used batons and tear gas against them and set dogs on them; the other migrants confirmed his account. The Afghani national said that there were women and

children in the group and that the Hungarian police used force against them as well. They were not provided with medical assistance until they returned to Belgrade. Neither he nor the other migrants want to be accommodated in an asylum centre, because they not on their route and they have no intention of seeking asylum in the Republic of Serbia. He highlighted the following problems: lack of sleeping space, especially when it rained, poor hygiene, lack of access to toilets (they can only use the Bus Station public toilet, which they have to pay) and lack of food and water. He said he planned on staying in Serbia until he found a way to continue his journey to Germany. He had no complaints about how he was treated by Serbian policemen since he entered the country.

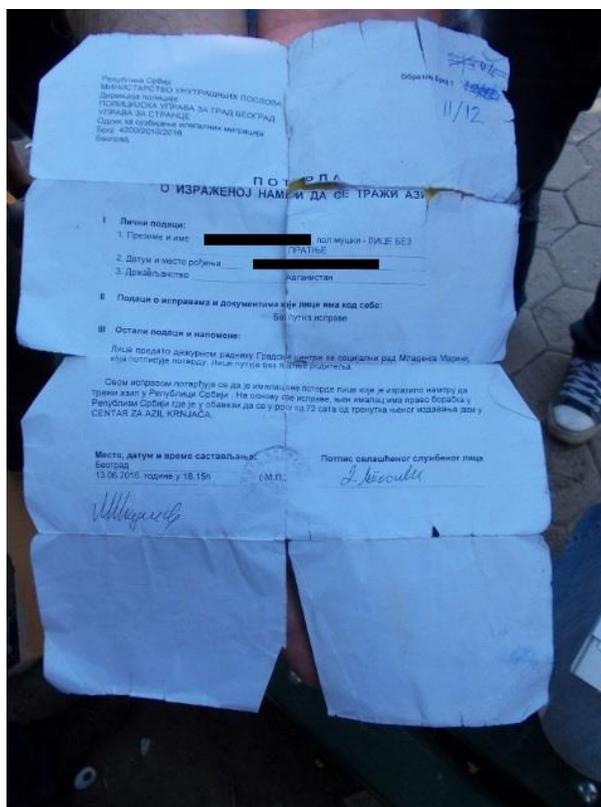
A number of interviewed migrants also alerted to the lack of security at night and frequent thefts, since the police were not present round the clock.

1.

<p><i>FINDING</i></p> <p>Migrants/refugees living in open air near the Belgrade Bus Station are often victims of crime.</p>
<p><i>OPINION</i></p> <p>The NPM is of the view that increased police presence in the vicinity of the main Belgrade Bus and Railway Stations would increase the security of the migrants/refugees and other people.</p>

The NPM Team interviewed another Afghani national (30), who this year came from Bulgaria to Serbia for the second time. Namely, last year, he passed through Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary and arrived in Austria, where he stayed for six months; he was returned to Bulgaria under the Dublin Regulation. He said he had been subjected to police brutality several times during his stay in Bulgaria. He was in Serbia already 20 or so days, with no hope that he would be able to continue his journey to Austria.

Several of the migrants the NPM Team talked to were minors. One of them, from Afghanistan, said he was traveling in the company of his friends, who were older than him, and his distant relatives. The NPM Team asked him how he had got his ear cut and he said he got it six days earlier, when a Hungarian border officer kicked him. Another 16-year-old minor said he was travelling with his distant relatives and that he had managed to enter the EU six months ago. He first crossed into Hungary and then went to Slovakia, from which he was returned to Bulgaria. He again entered the Republic of Serbia 20 days ago. He spoke about the extremely poor living conditions in Bulgaria. Another 16-year-old Afghani national also said he was travelling with his distant relatives and had tried to enter Hungary thrice. He succeeded once, with a group of 27 people, but the Hungarian border police used force and set the dogs on them to push them back into Serbia. He was examined by a doctor only upon his return to Belgrade. Although he has a certificate of intent to seek asylum, he has no intention of staying in the Republic of Serbia; West Europe is his final destination.



The NPM Team also talked to a group of Pakistani nationals, who had just returned from the Serbian-Hungarian border. They said that a group of eight of them had tried to cross the border two days earlier, but that around 20 Hungarian police set dogs on them and applied physical force and spray to drive them away. One member of the group had visible wounds, which he said were dog bites. These migrants also said they had been subjected to humiliation, because the Hungarian police spat and hurled insults at them.



The NPM team also interviewed a family, who had left Iran a month ago and was on its way to West Europe. They said they had problems with the Greek police, until they crossed into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It took them three days to pass through Macedonia and reach Serbia. Austria or Sweden are their end destination. They said they still had not tried to

cross into Hungary, because they knew that the border with Hungary was closed at the moment. They have not reported to the Serbian police and they do not want to seek asylum in the Republic of Serbia. They have been spending all their time in the park at the Bus Station and have alerted to the lack of toilets, since the Bus Station toilet was not open at night. They also complained they had not had a chance to shower since they entered Serbia.

2.

FINDING

The lack of toilets near the College of Economy and the Belgrade Bus Station Arrivals Gate the migrants/refugees could access at any time has exacerbated the hygiene in the parks they have been staying at.

OPINION

The NPM is of the view that the hygiene would improve and that potential health risks would be prevented if mobile toilets were put up at the informal venues.

None of the interviewed migrants complained about how they were treated by the Serbian police officers.

5. Conclusion

In view of the situation at the venues and the statements of the migrants the NPM Team interviewed, it may be concluded that their personal safety is under threat and that they are extremely susceptible to falling victim of crime at the at the parks near the Belgrade main Bus and Railway Stations they have been rallying at of their own accord. Furthermore, their longer sojourn in totally inadequate conditions and in open air may amount to inhuman treatment.

3.

The NPM is of the view that the competent authorities need to take measures to accommodate the migrants in the state facilities (asylum and reception centres) without delay.