

The situation at the border crossings Gevgelija and Kumanovo

Period: 01.05.2017– 31.05.2017

Gevgelija

The situation with the refugees in the reception-transit center for refugees in Vinojug is unchanged. The number of refugees accommodated in the camp is low, and the frequency of movement of refugees who get caught down illegal roads outside the camp has also decreased.

Available facilities and conditions

The number of refugees in the camp constantly amounts to 9, and their countries of origin are Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Some of the refugees have started procedures for family reunion.

The kitchen that operated within the camp has been officially closed. The obligation to distribute food has been undertaken by the Red Cross.

No infrastructural changes to the camp have been spotted. The hygiene is at a satisfactory level.

Institutional treatment

Foreign police services have paid sporadic visits to the camp. For example, in the course of May 2017, there were visits by the police services of the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia. Along the length of the borderline, moreover, police representatives of Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia and Austria have been spotted.

The practice of illegal “deportation” of refugees caught down illegal roads across the Republic of Macedonia continues. In the course of May 2017, a total of 24 refugees originating from various countries were caught by the police down illegal roads and deported on 6 occasions. In the first case, on 13.05.2017, four refugees were brought to the camp, two of whom originating from Algeria, one from Syria and one originating from Libya, who were caught by the police near the railway station in Gevgelija. After they were questioned by the police they were all transported to Greece without further delay. On 23.05.2017, three refugees originating from Iran were caught near the railway station again. After a brief questioning, they were immediately sent to Greece. On the next day, five refugees originating from Afghanistan, Egypt and Lebanon were brought to the camp and underwent the usual procedure. Towards the end of the month, on 28.05.2017, eight refugees were brought to the camp, four of whom originating from Pakistan and four originating from India. They were caught by the police in the vicinity of the border crossing Bogorodica, and according to their statements they had been victims of smugglers. They paid smugglers in Greece 800 EUR per person to transport them to Tabanovce, but after they were taken over by smugglers in Macedonia, they were left at a certain location with a vehicle, whereby the smugglers fled the vehicle and the refugees were caught by the police. After they were questioned by the police in the camp, they were all taken to the police station

where the police will decide which of them will be kept as witnesses in the criminal proceeding against the smugglers, while the rest of them will be taken back to Greece.

It is an interesting occurrence that on 29.05.2017, three citizens of Kosovo and one of Albania were brought to the camp, after being caught by the police in the vicinity of the village of Prdejci, without any personal identification documents. It is unknown where the police took them after they were questioned in the camp.

Regular medical check-ups by a pediatrician have been provided for the children staying in the camp.

Representatives of the Red Cross accompany the refugees who want to take a walk in the city.

Kumanovo

In the course of May, apart from the decrease in the number of refugees staying in the reception-transit camp, the frequency of movement of refugees in the camp has decreased. However, the frequency of refugees transiting in the nearby villages has increased, along with the number of refugees staying in immediate vicinity to the camp.

Available facilities and conditions

The number of refugees in the course of this month amounts to about 20 and there have been only minor variations from this number. The camp continues to be of open character, i.e. the refugees residing there may stay for a longer or shorter period of time, whereby they are free to leave the camp.

There have been no significant changes to the camp infrastructure.

A significant decline in the quality of food has been observed in this course of this month. The refugees' complaints are that the food is insufficient and of a poor quality. At the same time, a limitation to the access to water has been put in place, i.e. the refugees are only entitled of one 0.5 liter bottle of water a day. The poor quality and lack of food has not changed despite the start of the Ramadan fasts.

The Helsinki Committee urges for the quality of food to be improved in order for it to satisfy all nutritional standards, as well as for unlimited quantity of water to be provided. These practices are impermissible.

Most of the refugees accommodated in the camp are generally not satisfied with the conditions and have expressed willingness to leave the camp, due to the hopeless situation that they have faced for a longer period of time.

Institutional treatment

At the start of the month, the practice of selective filtering of refugees asking to be accommodated in the camp continued. However, since the middle of this month, a decision of the competent institutions was announced which would stipulate non-selective approach to the refugees in the camp. Although the

admission of refugees coming to the camp has increased, no full implementation of a non-selective approach has been observed.

Sporadically some groups arriving to the camp after they had been sent back by the Serbian police were observed. However, there is an increasing number of groups of refugees who get caught in the villages in the vicinity (around the camp and in the open air), who do not want to be sheltered in the camp for fear they will be deported to Greece or another neighboring country.

At the start of the month, a four-member family originating from Syria asked from the competent institutions to be transported to Greece. Their request was approved and several days later their trip to Greece was organized.

The situation in the reception centers in the Republic of Macedonia

The number of refugees accommodated in the reception centers is not available.

Irregular migration

In the course of this period, a single criminal-legal event related to refugees was registered in the bulletins of the Ministry of Interior. On 28.05.2017 the police caught a vehicle transporting 8 refugees originating from Pakistan and India. After the vehicle swerved off the road, in the vicinity of the village of Prdejci, the driver fled. MoI informed that some of the refugees will be transported to the Reception Center for Foreigners - Gazi Baba for further proceedings, while the rest of them were taken over by the police services in Gevgelija.