

HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



The situation at the border crossings Gevgelija and Kumanovo

Period: 01.08.2017– 31.08.2017

Gevgelija

Over the course of August, the number of refugees accommodated in the camp remained relatively low, with sporadic changes related to individuals or a group of refugees who came and went. The high temperatures resulted in a lower level of movement of the refugees in the camp. The practice of taking refugees back to Greece in an illegal manner continues.

Available facilities and conditions

Since the start of the month when it amounted to 12, the number of refugees changed on several occasions due to the departure of some and arrival of other people in the camp. At the end of the month the number of refugees went up to 19 refugees, originating from Iraq and Afghanistan. Due to the high temperatures, the refugees spent the better part of their days inside their containers.

There have been no major infrastructural changes in the camp. The camp hygiene has improved after the change of janitors at the start of the month.

The NGO Legis served the refugees hot and cold drinks.

The refugees are allowed to take a walk to town when they need it. Moreover, regular medical check-ups are available, as well as visits of the children by a pediatrician.

On 23.08.2017, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the European Union and the International Organization for Migration paid a visit to the camp. The goal of the visit was to get acquainted with the situation in the camp. On 29.08.2017, on the other hand, the Ambassador of Iraq to Sofia visited the camp, in order to meet a family originating from Iraq who were getting ready to go back to their native country on that same day.

Institutional treatment

The presence of foreign police units, i.e. the police officers of Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary can still be observed in the camp and its vicinity. On 17.08.2017, a new contingent of police officers from Poland arrived to the camp.

At the very start of the month, on 02.08.2017, a family from Iraq was transported to Greece, at their own request. On 14.08.2017, on the other hand, a person originating from Iraq who had stayed in the camp 17 months was transported to Greece, at his own request.

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On 03.08.2017, a case of domestic violence was registered in the camp, whereby a police intervention ensued. After the incident, the family was divided in two containers.

Over the course of the month, refugees who had been caught down illegal roads across the country were brought to the camp on several occasions. On 16.08.2017, 5 refugees were brought to the camp, caught in the vicinity of Negotino by the police. All of them were adult men originating from Algeria, who had previously been staying in the refugee camps in Greece, and had tried to take the “Balkan Route” on several occasions. The Red Cross provided them with medical and humanitarian aid immediately, and after they were interviewed by the police, they were immediately sent back to Greek territory. On 19.08.2017, a person originating from Pakistan was brought to the camp, and after he was interviewed by the police he was sent back to Greek territory. On the next day, two refugees of unknown origin who were caught in the vicinity of the railway station, were directly transported to Greek territory, without first being taken to the camp. On 22.08.2017, a five-member family originating from Iraq was brought to the camp, and was temporarily sheltered there, whereby the number of refugees in the camp increased to 12. The family expressed intention not to stay in the camp for long. On 26.08.2017, two refugees originating from Afghanistan who were caught in the vicinity of the railway station in Gevgelija, were brought to the camp. After they were interviewed and registered by the police, they were immediately transported to Greece.

On 29.08.2017, 25 refugees from Tabanovce were brought to the police station in Gevgelija, who, without being taken to the camp, were transported to Greece in several groups. It is not clear whether they were provided with legal aid, or medical and humanitarian assistance.

On 31.08.2017, nine refugees were brought to the camp, 8 of whom belong to a family from Iraq, along with one refugee originating from Afghanistan. All of them were accommodated in the camp. Consequently, the number of refugees in the camp increased to 17 at the end of the month.

Kumanovo

In the course of August, the camp infrastructure remained unchanged, while the number of refugees changed on daily basis. During a short period of time, all the refugees coming from outside were allowed in the camp, whereby they were provided with food, but after some time the old practice of selective filtering of refugees and a closed door to the refugees coming from outside, was re-instated. In general, the refugees do not have their rights violated, with the exception of the illegal “deportation” to Greece.

Available facilities and conditions

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At the beginning of August about 75 refugees were accommodated in the camp, after their number continued to increase since the end of the previous month. 26 of them were registered, while 17 were considered to be unregistered, although the overall number during lunchtime moved from 70 to 80, because of the refugees who come from around the camp. Most of them are provided with food.

The number of registered refugees decreases when some of them leave the camp in order to cross the Macedonian-Serbian border. Unless they return within 24 hours, they are deleted from the list of refugees registered in the camp.

On 24.08.2017, representatives of the office of the Ombudsman paid a visit to the camp.

Institutional treatment

The last family originating from Iraq (a husband, wife and three children) who was waiting for the operation of the son's leg, left the camp on 07.08.2017, in an attempt to cross the border.

On 10.08.2017, the border police brought two families originating from Afghanistan in the camp, consisting of men, women and 7 children. After staying in the camp several days, they decided to leave it and head to Greece. On 14.08.2017 they were transported with a vehicle of the Red Cross.

The police sporadically prepares a list of refugees expressing intent to be transported back to Greece and afterwards transport is organized for them.

Mid-month there was increased presence of the police in the camp, as police officers were deployed down the perimeter of the camp fence. Their deployment was in order to prevent the refugees around the camp from entering the camp. A practice was established not to allow re-admittance of refugees who had already stayed in the camp, and left it in order to try and cross the border with Serbia. Consequently, the number of refugees dropped to 13-18.

On 26.08.2017, the border police brought two groups of refugees originating from Afghanistan to the camp, who had come back from Serbia. The first group consisted of 16 people, 6 of whom adults and 10 children. The other group consisted of 5 members, also originating from Afghanistan. They were all accommodated in the camp.

On 29.08.2017, during the morning hours, three refugees were caught by police in the fields in the immediate vicinity of the camp. Around 10 am, the three refugees, along with 21 more refugees from the camp, were loaded in two vans and one car by the police teams and the Red Cross mobile team and then transported to Greece.

17 refugees remained in the camp, 10 of whom are unregistered and 7 are registered.

