

HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



The situation at the border crossings Gevgelija and Kumanovo

Period: 01.09.2017– 30.09.2017

Gevgelija

In the course of September 2017, in the Reception-Transit Center Vinojug, Gevgelija, there were no major changes, meaning that the situation was peaceful with very little movement. The number of refugees who are staying in the camp has decreased, but there is increased stirring of larger groups of refugees in this region. No significant violations of the rights of refugees were observed, but the practice of illegal deportation of individuals and larger groups to Greece is still ongoing.

Available facilities and conditions in the camp

The number of refugees accommodated in the camp at the start of the month was 18, 4 of whom have origin from Afghanistan, one is from Pakistan and 13 are from Iraq. However, due to the arrival of new ones and the departure of quite a few refugees, the total number dropped to 4 by the end of the month.

No major infrastructural changes to the camp have been observed. The hygiene in the camp is at a satisfactory level, but if we take into account the drop in temperatures, there is lack of adequate clothing for the migrants in the camp.

The refugees in the camp complain of the quality of food they receive, i.e. that most of the time they are given canned and dry food.

Sporadically, workshops for the adults and children in the camp are being held. With the increase in the number of children, the educational workshops organized by non-governmental organizations are being reactivated.

Presence of police units from the Czech Republic was observed in the camp in Gevgelija. On 06.09.2017, representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the Army of the Republic of Macedonia paid a visit to the camp.

A pregnant refugee in the camp was provided with a gynecological check-up in the hospital in Gevgelija. Gynecological check-ups are periodically provided for the rest of the women in the camp too. Furthermore, a pediatrician for the children is available three days a week.

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 ХЕЛСИНШКИ	КОМИТЕТИ И	МАКЕДОНИЈА	КОМИТЕТИ ДИ	 HELSINKI	 ХЕЛСИНШКИ
КОМИТЕТ ЗА ЧОВЕКОВИ	 HELSINKI	CUMHURİYETİ'NİN	 HELSINKI	КОМИТЕТИ БАСО	КОМИТЕТ ЗА ЉУДСКА
ПРАВА НА РЕПУБЛИКА	PER TE DREJTAT E HEBRIJOT	İNSAN HAKLARI KOMİTESİ	TI- NDREPTULI-A	E MANUSĖNGERE	ПРАВА РЕПУБЛИКЕ
МАКЕДОНИЈА	REPUBLIKES SE	MAKEDONIA	OMLUIDIREPUBLICA	NEJAMIJA KT	МАКЕДОНИЈЕ
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Institutional treatment

In the course of this month, a total of 66 refugees were brought to the camp, along with 9 refugees taken to the police station in Gevgelija. Most of them, after a talk with the security services, were transported to Greece.

Thus, for example, on 01.09.2017, 7 refugees were brought to the camp in three groups, five of whom were from Pakistan and two from Bangladesh, all of them males, caught by the police down irregular routes. After they were all questioned and registered by the services in the camp, they were immediately taken to Greek territory. In the course of the previous night, one person originating from Pakistan was brought to the camp, being a part of the group of 20 Pakistanis who had been caught by the police in the vicinity of the border crossing Bogorodica over the course of the previous month. The person was accommodated in the camp due to a leg injury and the need of medical aid, while the rest of the people were immediately transported to Greece. In the following days, the refugee was transported to the local hospital to have his leg x-rayed.

On 02.09.2017, two refugees were brought to the camp, males, originating from Pakistan, aged 18 and 34. One of them sought medical aid, which was provided by the Red Cross. According to their statements, they had spent most of their journey travelling on foot, transiting through Iran and Turkey to reach Greece where they stayed for about 5 months. It was the first time they had transited through Macedonia, while their final destination was Germany. After they were registered and questioned by the security services, they were deported to Greek territory.

In the course of the night on 06.09.2017, a larger group of refugees consisting of a total of 30 refugees arrived, 21 of whom were brought to the camp, while 9 were taken to the police station in Gevgelija. They were provided with humanitarian aid by the team of the Red Cross, but there was no need of medical aid. The police caught the group at the border, exactly as they attempted to enter the country. The group consisted exclusively of males, but their country of origin remains unknown. After a few hours, the entire group was transported to Greek territory. This was the second case of this kind over the course of the previous month, after a larger group of refugees had also been caught by the police fifteen days prior to this, when they managed to catch only 35 refugees who were immediately taken back to Greek territory.

The Helsinki Committee reminds that the group “deportation” of refugees to Greece is impermissible according to the international standards, and constitutes a violation of human rights, since the individual cases are not taken into consideration separately, and there is no legal procedure and decision for their “deportation” from the country.

On the same day, a family originating from Iraq arrived to the camp, consisting of a husband and wife and their 4 children. On the next day, a five-member family originating from Iraq arrived to the camp – a

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husband, wife and three children, who were accommodated in the camp. After spending several days in the camp, they were taken to Greece at their own request. With their arrival, the number of refugees who were accommodated in the camp went up to 29.

On sporadic occasions when the police notice damage to the wire fence, probably caused by migrants wishing to cross the border, the security services take immediate action and fix it.

On 09.09.2017, in the early morning hours, another group of refugees consisting of 23 refugees originating from Pakistan and one originating from Syria, was brought to the camp after they were caught by the police in the vicinity of Gevgelija. They were held in the camp during the entire day, whereby they were registered by the security services and each of them individually had their personal belongings checked. The Red Cross provided them with food and water. By 3 pm they were transported to Greek territory at post 59 divided in two groups. On the same day, later in the afternoon, another refugee originating from Afghanistan was taken back to Greece at this own request. On the following day, on the other hand, the refugee originating from Syria who was a part of the group of Pakistanis who were taken to Greece on the previous day, was brought to the camp again. According to his statement he separated from the group and got lost, whereby he was caught by the police in the vicinity of the village of Prdejci.

On 11.09.2017, 14 refugees from the camp were taken to Greece at their own request. Consequently, the number of refugees in the camp dropped to 16, consisting of refugees originating from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. On the next day, a refugee originating from Pakistan was brought to the camp, caught in the vicinity of the village of Prdejci. Only several hours later, two more refugees were brought, caught in the village of Pepelishte in Negotino. According to them, they had been travelling with a smuggler who had charged them 500 EUR per person, took them to an unknown location and deserted them. The police services and the members of the DSC had talks with each of them, whereby they were searched and had their mobile phones checked. By noon on the same day, they were all transported to Greek territory.

On 15.09.2017, a juvenile originating from Pakistan was brought to the camp in the early morning hours. He was questioned during the day, but he refused to communicate. It was registered that he had previously already been accommodated in the camp, but with data different to the data from his personal identification documents. Allegedly, he had once already reached Serbia, whereby he was sent back to Macedonian territory and this was the second time he was trying to transit the country. For the time being he is accommodated in the camp, but the representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Police need to decide whether he should be relocated to the Safe House in Skopje. On the same day, one refugee originating from Syria who had been staying in the camp several days, was taken back to Greece at his own request. Thereby the number of refugees in the camp dropped to 6.

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A refugee originating from Bangladesh who had been accommodated in the camp for several days had turned out to have symptoms of tuberculosis according to certain findings. He was accommodated in the camp and sent to medical check-ups in the Infective Clinic in Skopje in order to have his health checked. Measures were also taken to protect the other people in the camp. Several days later the camp underwent a check by the Public Health Institution from Veles, whereby all the containers accommodating refugees were disinfected, along with the offices and space for the employees. Later on, the medical tests taken were negative, it was established that the person was not sick with tuberculosis.

On 22.09.2017, three refugees originating from Iran were brought to the camp, who had been caught by the police at the bus station in Gevgelija, after they had returned from Serbia on their own. They were immediately questioned by the police and sent back to Greek territory. On 25.09.2017, on the other hand, 14 refugees originating from Palestine were brought to the camp. They were provided with food and water by the Red Cross, while the police services questioned them. In the course of the day, they were deported to Greek territory in the vehicles of the border police. On 28.09.2017, one person originating from Iran who was accommodated in the camp, was taken back to Greece at his own request.

Kumanovo

Over the course of this month, the situation on the Reception-transit Camp Tabanovce was relatively peaceful, with a decrease in the number of refugees, but continual stirring within and outside the camp. No major violations of the refugees' rights were observed.

Available facilities and conditions

The situation in the camp was relatively peaceful, without major changes. The number of refugees fluctuated from 14 to 17, whereby refugees of various origin were accommodated there including refugees from: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Algeria and Syria. By the end of the month, with the departure of some refugees and the arrival of others, the number of refugees in the camp reached 27, 17 of whom are registered and 8 are unregistered. Among them there are also 8 unaccompanied juveniles.

The refugees have the chance to go out of the camp twice a day for a period of two hours, when they can go shopping in the city, but must return afterwards. They are generally satisfied with the conditions in the camp and have no complaints with regards to the respect for their rights.

The refugees who are accommodated in the camp are provided with adequate medical care in the camp, and when the need of additional check-ups or medical intervention arises, they are sent to the hospital in either Kumanovo or Skopje.

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Institutional treatment

7 new refugees arrived in the camp on 03.09.2017. In the course of 04.09.2017, a family originating from Iraq, consisting of a husband, wife and their 4 children, arrived to the camp. They were found by the mobile team of the Red Cross, and they intend to go back to Greece.

3 refugees were brought during the night on 09.09.2017 and were registered in the camp. Consequently, the number of refugees in the camp went up to 17.

On 15.09.2017, the number of refugees in the camp went down by 7, as 7 refugees had allegedly fled the camp in Tabanovce in the course of the previous night, in order to cross the border with Serbia. On the next day, four of them returned to the camp, while the remaining three had crossed the border.

In addition, two new refugees originating from Afghanistan have arrived to the camp who had entered the country from Serbia, and their intention is to go back to Greece.

Over the course of the night on 21.09.2017, 4 new refugees, originating from Algeria, arrived in the camp. In the course of the following night (on 22.09.2017), another 4 refugees arrived in the camp who had been caught by the police in the village of Lojane, as their intention was to cross the border with Serbia. In the course of the night of the 23 September, on the other hand, about 8 refugees left the camp in order to cross the border with Serbia. Consequently, the number of refugees in the camp dropped to 8.

The situation in the Reception Centers in the Republic of Macedonia

The number of people accommodated in the Reception Center for Foreigners, as well as the Reception Center for Asylum-Seekers in Vizbegovo, is not available.

Irregular migration

Over the course of September 2017, the Ministry of the Interior registered 2 criminal legal events related to refugees. Namely, on 11.09.2017, in the immediate vicinity of the border crossing Tabanovce, Kumanovo, a police officer spotted 8 refugees from Pakistan coming out of passenger vehicle. After the police officer's signal to stop, the vehicle fled and headed for the main road to Kriva Palanka. The refugees were taken to a police station, and the police is working on clearing the case up.

On September 17, 2017, in the vicinity of the Prdejci village, mixed police teams consisting of police officers from Macedonia and Croatia noticed a passenger vehicle that they tried to stop. The vehicle kept moving even after it was signaled to stop. Later on, the vehicle was found without a driver, and 9 refugees from Pakistan were found in the vicinity, who were transferred to the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Skopje to await further action.