

solidarnost je naša snaga

Solidary visit to war refugees in Šid

REPORT

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During our short time in Šid, we had the opportunity to speak to some people and learned a lot from these conversations. Entry into the refugee camp in Šid is restricted to Commissariat staff, camp staff, and a few other employees from humanitarian organizations. As for refugees or asylum seekers, entrance into the camp is restricted to those who have registered with police upon entry into Serbia. It seems that the registration process can only be done in Belgrade, which is approximately 100 km away. Directly beside the camp is a restaurant where many of the people from the camp spend time, hang out, charge their phones, and connect with family via Wi-Fi. The restaurant staff play with the young children and seem to have great relationships with the refugees, with no animosity. Outside of this restaurant, we spent some time speaking with a young refugee from Afghanistan, who explained to us that his leg is in pain because of an interaction with police, who caught him in Zagreb, Croatia. He had illegally crossed into Croatia, and as he described to us the interaction with the police upon being caught, he made a motion of a hand holding an object and hitting his leg. Following this physical abuse, he was deported back into Serbia, and now needs to register in the Belgrade police station. The camp in Šid refused to give him medical assistance, despite the fact that he walks with a visible limp, and the staff at the camp advised him to see assistance in Belgrade. This is also another example of refugees who apply for asylum in Croatia, only to have the police break international conventions and ignore their request so that they can deport them to Serbia or Bosnia (depending on which country they entered Croatia from). This is certainly not the first case like this that we have heard from those crossing borders into Croatia.



We spoke to UNHCR staff in Šid who told us that there are approximately 500 people in this camp. There is a mix of women, children, families, young men. The camp is located in a large two-storey building, but this building cannot possibly accommodate 500 people, so we presume there are tents behind, likely in the yard. The UNHCR staff also told us that most people are from Afghanistan in this camp, much like camps/parks in Belgrade.

The refugees in Šid continue to attempt to cross borders on their way to the EU, despite the risks of being caught, and despite the high possibility of being physically assaulted by police in Croatia and Hungary.

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