

# solidarnost je naša snaga

## Visits war refugees from the Middle East - Report from the park

April 21<sup>st</sup> 2016.

On April 21, 2016, female and male activists of Women in Black visited refugees in the park at the bus station and the one at the Faculty of Economics. There were tens of men but also women who travel alone, as well as 5-6 larger families. Most of them were from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and there was also a family from Maghreb countries. They did not want to precise what country they're from exactly. Everybody runs from war and terror: "They are after us, both Daesh (Islamic State) and the Taliban, we don't want to go with neither of them..." Nobody was willing to speak much about the details of their journey, where they're from or where they're going, most of all because of smuggling and fear of being used and robbed, which was the case with many so far. Closing of the "Balkan route" means increase of smuggling networks, exploitation of refugees, an even greater tragedy for the refugees...

Besides the fear of giving out details, the problem was also the language barrier. The refugees spoke mostly Urdu and Farsi, while their English was poor. A young man from Pakistan was explaining about the terror of the Taliban against the population in his country. There are shootings and shellings every day, which was the main reason why he fled the country, while his mother and father stayed.

Everybody's goal is to reach Germany. They had the worst experience at the border with Greece and Macedonia.

The activists gave them modest aid. First of all they visited mothers with children. They also spoke with teenagers from Afghanistan. After that they went to Mostarska Street, to a squat where some of the refugees were accommodated and given food, as well as toiletries. The conditions were dramatic. It's written "No border hostel" at the entrance of the squat. Everybody has a sleeping bag inside but they all sleep on the asphalt. The space smells bad. They have drinking water in the front and washbowls for washing clothes. There's fear from scabies spreading. The roof is in bad condition and is leaking on several spots. Some windows are without glass, there's no restrooms and the hygiene is really bad.

On April 20th, 2016, at 6 pm it was announced that the Commissariat for refugees will come with the police and deport all of the refugees from the squat to the camp in Krnjaca. At that time there were around 30 female and male activists from different organizations in front of the squat gathered to show solidarity, but the Commissariat did not show up at the end. The police were passing by several times asking for ID from 3 persons in the street but they didn't ask activists in front of the squat nor the refugees. The police were previously breaking into the squat several nights previously and checking everything while carrying guns and flashlights. A female volunteer from the Info house (behind the park at the Lasta bus station) said that the park was being "cleaned" from the refugees that day by the communal police, chasing them out of the park, while the people from the Commissariat were picking up blankets and clothes that the refugees left behind in the park and were throwing them into garbage while grinning, as said by the volunteer.

An increasing number of refugees in the park is being expected in the following weeks.

Female and male activists who visited the park: Goran, Mina, Staša i Tomislav

Reported by: Tomislav

