

solidarnost je naša snaga

Visit to refugees / migrants - Bihac, BH

September 2nd-3rd 2018

Since February 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina has become the main destination of refugees / migrants, on the way to the desired destination in the West. On this road Bihać, due to the proximity of the border with Croatia, became the center of the gathering of refugees / migrants. From Bihać to the border with Croatia is 12 km, and to the border with Slovenia 120 km. Refugees / migrants passing this path mostly by foot, which takes about a week. There are thousands of refugees / migrants in Bihać. Their presence in the city is large, because it is a small city, Bihać has 40,000 inhabitants in total. The largest part, about 1,000 of them are located in the Borici neighbourhood, in and around the building of the students dormitory. It is a large building, whose construction began before the war and the building remained uncompleted. There is no windows or doors. Most of the refugees / migrants reside in this building, while the smaller part of them sleeps in tents around the building. The local Red Cross / Crescent is managing this site. There are 3 meals a day. Also from Monday to Saturday there is a medical team on spot. Refugees / migrants on this place are mostly male, majority of them are from Pakistan, and there are also Afghans and Iranians in large numbers, and fewer from other countries, Syria, Iraq, Bangladesh, Morocco ... At the exit from Bihac to Cazin, a camp for refugees / migrants was opened, there are some 200 people, mostly families with children. The rest of the refugees live in abandoned houses or private accommodation. For this reason it is not possible to have a precise number of refugees.

What is most often seen in Bihac, both by refugees / migrants, and by the activists, is that the Croatian police behaved extremely brutally against refugees / migrants. Everyday evidence of the brutality of the Croatian police can be seen. Forms of violence have been known since before, when they were applied at the border of Croatia and Serbia. Refugees / migrants who are caught, were beaten, their property destroyed or



taken away (breaking mobile phones, seizing money, tents, backpacks ...), and then without any procedure they were returned to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were cases of extended torture. A group of refugees / migrants who managed to cross the border had been wandering in the forest for several days. As they were out of food, they decide to send one of them to neighbouring village to buy food in the store. After the seller informed the police, the police arrived and arrested and tortured him, trying to extract information where the rest of the group is. He claimed he was alone. After the torture which lasted for some time, the police returned him to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of these and similar actions by the Croatian police clearly indicate that this is a systematic terror against refugees / migrants. Numerous documents and evidence have been collected, but the reaction is lacking, both in Croatia and in the European Union, which proofs that there is a greater plan.

Despite all of the above, from activists who have been present in Bihac and its surroundings for months, we have heard that a large number of refugees manage to cross to Croatia and further.

The price they pay is huge, in every sense. There are tensions in the city, there are smaller incidents between refugees / migrants, and the cases of theft are also reported. All this is understandable, since many of them are returning from Croatian border with deteriorated health and without the entire property, and are forced to fight for survival.

The attitude of local residents towards refugees / migrants remained good. It is noticeable that the initial enthusiasm is fading, that fewer people are helping, because this situation in Bihac lasts for 6 months already. Nevertheless, refugees / migrants continue to praise the attitude of the local population towards them and they can freely and without fear move around the city.

The current situation regarding the living conditions of refugees / migrants can be called tolerable, the most basic needs are met. This situation certainly will not take much longer, because winter is approaching, and a greater number of refugees have no or completely inadequate accommodation.



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