

## How to survive on the streets of Belgrade (refugees / migrants in Belgrade)

**October 9th, 2018**

On the occasion of the twentyseventh anniversary of the establishment of Women in Black and our fight against militarism, nationalism, sexism, racism, homophobia and xenophobia (October 9th, 2018), WiB activists held a solidarity action with refugees / migrants.

Staša, Tomislav and Goran went to the park near the bus station Lasta (Belgrade) and shared some sweets with refugees/migrants, there we met a boy from Afghanistan who told us that he was sleeping in the abandoned „Simpo“ building, which is across the park and there is a larger group of refugees/migrants there.



When we went there the atmosphere of the building was post-apocalyptic. The building was semi-ruined, without doors and windows, while the broken glass and stuff was all over the floor.

We climbed up the stairs with the aid of a lamp on the phone, on the first floor we saw a fire at one corner in the distance. When we arrived we saw a small group of 4 or 5 refugees / migrants, cooking and heating around the fire.



We found them in the corner of a ruined room where they sat on an improvised bed of blankets fenced with plates, while one was cooking food in the pot.

We introduced ourselves and explained that we will come the next day and we will bring them a new cooking hob and some food.

We went to the building next to „Simpo“, the entrance was dark, the floor was full of garbage, we did not dare to climb up the floor because it was dangerous for life, because we could easily fall in the dark in the elevator shaft.

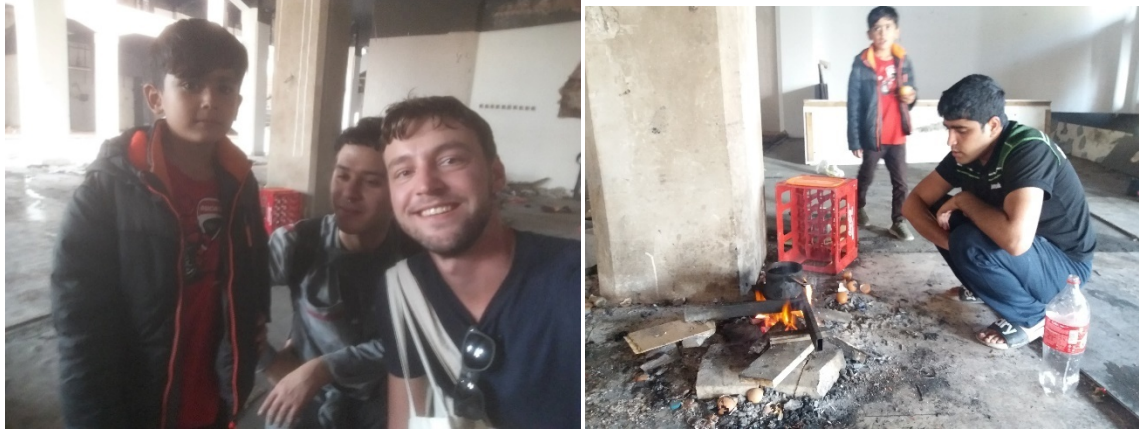


### October 10th, 2018

Two activists of Women in Black in Belgrade went to the abandoned building of the Simpo, which the authorities want to demolish, to visit refugees / migrants who were temporarily accommodated there in the inability to find accommodation. When we found them there on the second floor, the day before, we noticed that in the full darkness they burned fire and cooked dinner.



The building is in a desperate condition, full of broken glass and garbage. We took one pot and bought them carrots, potatoes, onions, zucchini, apples, bread, chocolates and wet wipes. We brought the pot and vegetables directly to the building while we shared chocolates and wipes in the park. In the building there were five young men and one kid who were eating.



One of them was at that time cooking tea. They were very grateful for everything we brought to them, and it was embarrassing for us to interrupt them at lunch. They told us that they had been in that building for fifteen days. In addition to them, on the other side of the floor there were about a dozen refugees / migrants, some of them with bags. They seemed to have just arrived.



After that, we went to the park at the Faculty of Economics. All the benches were full of refugees / migrants. There were over 100 of them from several countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran... There were plenty of Kurds among those from Iran. The Kurds talked about Kurdistan, which spread in 5 different countries. They told us about the diversity of the Iranian part of the Kurdistan, where besides Muslims Suni and Shia also live Catholics, Orthodox, Yazidis and atheists.

One boy from Afghanistan said he just wants to go to school, nothing more. He plans to continue his education in Serbia. He is 14 years old and went to elementary school until the Talibans burned it. He has been a refugee for several years and even worked for a year in Turkey. The other boy who was standing next to him is 17 years old, but since he looks older, in the Krnjača camp they refused him for accommodation.

Another young man from the Kurdish part of Iran tried to continue his journey through Bosnia, but he was deported back to Serbia. He tried to apply in Krnjaca, but they told him that the camp was full. He claims those are lies because he enough space. Many refugees / migrants coming from Iran are denied a permit

to stay in camp stay as well as to enter asylum process. Until that day, Iran had a visa free regime, but later that day we learned that Serbian Government introduced visa regime for Iranian citizens again.



One young Kurd arrived in Serbia a day earlier by plane. He received the accommodation in a camp in Sid and that day he came to the park in Belgrade for his friend to go to Sid together. He did not hear about Krnjaca camp, we informed him about this camp. He, like many refugees / migrants, is well informed about extremist governments in the world, both in Iran and in Europe. They know how Hungarian and Croatian police beat and abuse refugees / migrants, and their only option is for now Serbia or Bosnia. They consider that the other EU countries paid Hungary to raise its fence and tighten its xenophobic policy towards refugees / migrants.

We have learned a few words and expressions in Kurdish, Pashto and Farsi language. They also offered us Iranian cigarettes.

One man to whom we gave the chocolate, broken in and throw it away in the sign of revolt. Despair is among them, but most people are still optimists that they will manage to go to their desired destinations in the west. In the end, we wished them luck in Kurdish ("sar koutu bi") and farsi ("muafak bashi") as they taught us.

### **October 12th, 2018**

On Friday, October 12th, we again visited the refugees / migrants. When we got to the building where they were staying, we saw that the building was almost completely enclosed with a massive metal fence, the workers were just finishing the last parts of the fence. It was clear to us that refugees / migrants were forced to leave that building.

Then we start walking in surrounding streets and parks, and soon we met a group of people we met in the previous days in the abandoned building. It is a group of 5 brothers from the Baglan province in the northeast of Afghanistan. The youngest is about 7-8 years old, the oldest about 25 years. They came to Serbia from Bulgaria, where they spent several months, in how they call it the prison (camps in Bulgaria

are closed type, free movement inside and outside the camp is not allowed). They told us their mother is still in Bulgaria, in "prison".

We asked them about eviction from the building where they were, they told us that the police came and told them to leave the building, police did not use force, and gave them some time to collect their belongings.

They told us that they still have pots and dishes we gave them the previous day and that they will continue to make food for themselves, so we left them all the groceries we had.

This night they will probably spend in the park, sleeping rough, they will try to find another space where they can make some temporary home.

Their goal is Germany.

We exchanged phone numbers to stay in touch.

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