

## **Update from No Border initiative in Zagreb(Croatia)**

The border regime of the EU and Croatia as its (newer) member is still trying its best to keep people from coming to Europe and offers not much but repression for migrants coming to this country. We as an independent No Border group are trying to monitor what is going on in the camps, the detention centers and at the borders.

### **Police as “security“**

Since the 8th of May in the camp for asylum seekers in Zagreb Dugave, former “Hotel Porin“ the security company stopped working and police came to the camp and has now the function of security guards. The same day also police entered in the place of the security company in the camp for families, women and unaccompanied minors in Kutina (about one hour from Zg). The fact that police guards control now 24 hours the life of the asylum seekers and the people who already got asylum but must still live in the camp, is a scandal. Many refugees/migrants have trauma from police (in their countries or because of repression they experienced on their journey) AND NOW HAVE TO FACE POLICE EVERY DAY: so they can not feel like home, not even in their rooms in the camp.

According to the information we have this is not a permanent state, but the police is looking for a new security company to take over this job. But until now there is no news.

Unlike other (“open“) camps for asylum seekers (for example in Hungary) the one in Zagreb has strict rules and limits the freedom of movement on the people. If somebody is not there until 10 pm the guards/police don't let them in and he is forced to sleep outside.

Also how often people don't come back or too late gets recorded by the guards, this record has an influence on the asylum procedure, how much and in which cases it is used to deny people asylum is not clear.

In the next months more deportations of people to Croatia because of the Dublin-problem are expected. For now it's only single people and no charter flights.

### **For people who received Asylum..**

..the situation is not easier, by law having the right to an apartment and 800 kn monthly provided by the state, both is often not provided. People continue living in the camp(s), the limited time in which they have the right to an apartment is running off. Now we got to know that people who finally received their apartments are not provided with the money they have a right to which means people are put in apartments without food and without money. Few of them went from institution to institution fighting every month to get some money but not every one has access to language or the energy to fight every few weeks for a little amount of money to survive.

### **Repressive raids**

It is usual that the special police forces make raids in the center for asylum seekers in Zagreb Dugave. It happens every two weeks without prior warning that special armed forces shout „police!“ and give the order to open the doors of the rooms, about 5 in the morning. Treating the people like criminals they search all the rooms and ask for everything to whom it belongs and where the bill is for all the stuff they have in the rooms. This repressive behaviour is not explained to the asylum seekers beforehand, so it happens often that people are in shock at that moment. Most of all if refugees just came new, they are afraid that something will be done to them. There are several cases where people jumped out of the window, fearing the deportation to their country, where persecution and war are often awaiting them. So it was the case with young A. From S. - ten months ago he jumped out of the window from the third floor and is still rehabilitating from his injuries. He had just been in Croatia for 5 days so he didn't know what this shouting of armed units

meant. In fear of deportation and senseless police violence he instinctly jumped. Details on the case are trying to be hold back by the interior ministry.

### **Detention – new jails, old injustice**

Constantly people are held in the detention camp (jail!) near the town Ježevo, about 30 km from Zagreb. At the moment there are about 40 people there, among them one woman. It is really difficult for the detainees to get legal help from inside, since their lawyers that the state is obliged to provide mostly do not make attempt to get them out of this prison. They are detained in this so called “reception center for foreigners“ because of having crossed the border to Croatia illegally. Some refugees decide to not seek for asylum in order to prevent to have their fingerprints put in the Eurodac -server and their asylum case being bond to Croatia – there people are detained for at least 6 months. Others seek for asylum but are still held in detention for 3 months until they are transferred to the “open“ camp in Zagreb. Concerning the Dublin regulation – there are also reports from somebody that he has been deported back to Croatia from another EU country even though he refused (!)to seek for asylum here and waited the 6 months in the detention center in Ježevo (in order to avoid croatia fingerpints).

Apart from the detention prison in Ježevo, another detention prison (so called “transit center for foreigners“) has been built in Trilj, South Croatia, near to the coast and the Bosnian border. The center can be seen as a sign to the EU that Croatia wants to show their readiness to become a Schengen-member, since the prison is funded by the „Schengen facility fond“ and Croatia applies for Schengen membership in July this year. The detention prison in Trilj will imprison migrants from September this year.

The same Schengen fond financed the detention center that is being build in Tovarnik, at the border Croatia-Serbia and should start to work as a “transit center for foreigners“ from October 2015. The problem of detaining migrants is not very known in Croatia, locals are fed with racist stereotypes about migrants in the mainstream media.

### **„Save Camp for vulnerable Asylum Seekers Kutina“**

Kuntina is quite far outside of Zagreb and more isoated that the Camp in Dugave, Zagreb. Minors, families, older people and women are put in this camp, „for better protection“. It mostly means bigger exclusion from life and people in Zagreb, isolation, harder access to institutions, health care, friends.

In a case of a violently threatening husband (who doesnt live in kutina), the request for support and help was ignored by the guards. Their (guards/police)response was that they can not stop a person from entering, even though it has voilent consequences for this person and it is known before. Their advise to the woman was to leave the camp and hide somewhere else or bring it to court, which in most cases for people within an asylum procedure is not an option and also in a situation of actual threat is no help at all.

### **Public discourse, more fences**

Since Hungary wants to built a fence ant the border to Serbia, the mainstream press reported that all the migrants would come to Croatia then. On the other hand, as it was the „international refugee week“ there was also quite a lot constructive critique on the EU border sistem all around the media. This was also due to some public events that aimed to raise awareness about the deaths of the border system, like the performance / die-in in front of the EU-house in Zagreb on saturday ( <http://www.cms.hr/hr/azil-i-integracijske-politike/prosvjedna-akcija-za-svjetski-dan-izbjeglica-na-trgu-europe-koliko-jos-smrti-do-solidarnosti> ) - We adress everybody again to NOT talk about „the problem of the refugees/migrants“ but we must scandalize the system and the EU politics of accepting people to die (or even shooting at them) but at the same time letting people pass so that they could illegalized be like slaves in a capitalist system and also serve as a scapegoat for the national politicians (of all parties) that is trying to maintain inequalities.

## **Solidarity and resistance**

Even though there is a strong repression on asylum seekers and refugees, making it difficult to fight for their right to be treated like human beings in Croatia (threat of getting a negative asylum decision)- people are resisting against this shameful system that exists in the whole EU. Often hungerstrikes or other forms of resistance in the detention center in Ježevo are happening without any media reports on that. Three persons living in the asylum camp in Zagreb published their pictures of the miserable life in a waiting line and without money and knowledge about their future in a brochure that was published in June 2015. Also on weekly meetings of the no border initiative a "day against borders" was organized in April to raise attention on the problem of the border and the lack of freedom of movement for certain people. Ultimately asylum seekers, refugees and people from Croatia or other European countries wrote a letter of solidarity to the striking workers of „Željezara Adria Čelik“ in Split and -as no border initiative- offered to support them in their struggle for their not paid salaries (read the whole letter below).

On the 14th of June was the international day against detention prisons and deportation. In solidarity against the CIEs and all the detention centers and deportations (<https://15jdiacontraloscie.wordpress.com/>)! Freedom of movement for everyone!

Links:

<https://noborderserbia.wordpress.com/shut-down-jezevo/>

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Respected workers of Adria Steel,

We welcome your persistence in the strike and fight for your rights and will use this opportunity to express our support! Direct action and pressure on the owners and tycoons are in most cases the only way to bring change. We support your request for payment of all unpaid wages, that presents only a part of the struggle for a dignified life and work, against a system in which some people are less valuable than others. It is the injustice that each of us experiences daily, not only in Croatia: the inequality between the owners and workers, inequality between those who have a European passport and those with documents from the countries of the "third world", the inequality between women and men ... What we have in common is a subordinate position in the system that exploits us all and at the same time wants to divide us.

We are an independent initiative "No Border", that brings together people who are refugees that sought or got an asylum in Croatia, people from Croatia and other countries. We are not a humanitarian organization, but we work on the principles of solidarity, autonomy and self-organization. We are fighting against the repression of migrants within the EU border regime and for freedom of movement. Through the Schengen fund in Croatia more than 2 billion euros are invested in building of prisons for migrants: the extension of an existing prison for migrants called "reception center for foreigners" in Ježevo, detention center in Trilj and still unfinished prison in Tovarnik. Migrants (including women and children) in these centers are imprisoned for up to 18 months - only because they were accused, without trial, to have crossed or attempted to cross the state border without proper documents. In the centers of closed type, almost only form of struggle left to migrants is a hunger strike, which is also often used by desperate workers in Croatia. Capitalism is eating our lives, our dreams, our youthful ages, our businesses and eating all the resources at an extent that in the age of retirement old men and women are collecting bottles from garbage.

Due to insufficient knowledge of the language and isolation in the center for asylum seekers it is difficult for us to know about struggles like yours. After we talked and got acquainted with your situation, we wanted to express support. Also, we want to explain some things about the situation in which we find ourselves - sharing knowledge is the only way to combat prejudice we often encounter, such as the fear that there will be too many migrants and that because of them it will be even more difficult to find work.

The largest number of refugees from war zones remain in the countries bordering their own - travel to Europe is expensive and risky (they have no freedom of movement and are forced to travel illegally), and small number is physically able to handle such a long, arduous and dangerous journey. It's hard for them to live far from their families, in a country whose language they do not speak and where they are forced to live illegally. We do not want people classified into categories such as "asylum seekers" or "refugees" - we are all just people, often workers like yourselves, and at least for a while part of Croatian society. When people from the Center for asylum seekers in Zagreb at the time of the floods in Slavonia helped and worked alongside locals for days, nobody reported about it. There was no need to report it, as we believe that mutual solidarity is something that comes naturally.

We agree with what one of you said about the system of the European Union - no one there cares about the workers in Croatia, while on the other hand they determine that Croatia will have to accept more refugees. You pointed out the connection of colonialism with today's situation of migrants - those Western countries exploited the people and natural resources of the countries of origin of migrants and thus became the richest countries in the world. Although Croatia and other countries in the region such as Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had no colonies, they are now given orders by European Union about how the asylum system must be, and how to accept refugees. Croatia, as well as other peripheral European countries, is exploited through the system of "fortress Europe", working for the "protection" of those countries which are most responsible for the situation we face today.

Experience of migrants shows us that the asylum system in the EU is just a story, and that the protection of refugees and human rights exists only on paper. Let's not fall for racist allegations that migrants are to blame for everything, while our common enemy is the powerstructure of states and rulers, with their corrupt institutions and politicians, under whatever name they rule. Let's face it, the migration can not be stopped. Each of us has at least some relatives in other countries, or we ourselves have in some period left our home as a result of the war or in search of work and a better life. And wherever you are, as workers we are equally exploited. That will not be changed by politicians. The only thing we can rely on is our mutual solidarity, to understand and support each other regardless of our place of birth or the language we speak. We live in Croatia and we want to engage in order to achieve better living conditions of all the people who live here. We are with you like real brothers and sisters, hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder. If there is a way that may help you in your fight, we will be happy to respond.

Kindest regards,  
No Border Initiative

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