

## MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN CROATIA

### 10/05/2021 – 26/05/2021

- The **Protecting Rights at Borders** (PRAB) initiative recently released a [report](#) (Pushing Back Responsibility. Rights Violations as a “Welcome Treatment” at Europe’s borders) where it recorded “2,162 cases of “pushbacks” at different borders in Italy, Greece, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Hungary”. The report was [carried out](#) on the basis of bilateral agreements between countries.

### 27.04.2021 – 10.05.2021

- NGOs strongly [criticised](#) the recently agreed plan between Austria and Bosnia to return migrants and asylum seekers.
- Border Violence Monitoring Network [published](#) its March 2021 Report where it recorded 31 pushback cases, impacting 671 people-on-the-move in the Balkans.
- On 4 March 2021, Croatia’s Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that Serbia cannot be deemed a safe third country.
- According to the Constitutional Court of Croatia, Croatia has [violated](#) the rights of the family of little Madina Hussiny, the 6-year-old Afghan girl who was killed at the Serbia-Croatia border in 2018, and put them at risk of torture and abuse.

### 13.04.2021 – 26.04.2021

- A [new migratory route](#) has opened in the Balkans: passing through Romania from Serbia to reach Hungary and then arrive in other EU countries. This is a longer and no less risky route and a consequence of the EU’s migration security policies.

### 29.03.2021 – 12.04.2021

- An Afghan woman was allegedly [sexually assaulted](#) by Croatian border police, held at knifepoint and forced to strip naked, while trying to cross from Bosnia with a group of migrants. The European Commission called on Croatian authorities to thoroughly investigate all allegations into such a serious criminal action. Drones, thermal-vision cameras and heartbeat

detectors are among new, sophisticated [technological tools](#) used to detect migrants crossing borders in the Balkan route and unlawfully pushing them back, in an increase in violence and human rights violations.

- On 5 April 2021, the UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) [published](#) a statement raising concerns on the violent pushbacks and collective expulsions along the Croatian border with BiH and calls for urgent actions to put an end to this unlawful practice.

#### **10/03/2021 – 29/03/2021**

- On 22 March 2021, a highway [accident](#) in Croatia left four dead and about 20 people injured. The Croatian police suspected the victims were migrants who were trying to reach Europe.

#### **23/02/2021 – 10/03/2021**

- Save the Children International [denounced](#) that hundreds of unaccompanied minors and children with families are trapped in the Balkans facing pushbacks, trafficking and exploitation. Save the Children International called on EU institutions and EU member states to not miss the opportunity to improving the current legislation on migration.
- A new report from Human Rights Watch [witnesses](#) the brutal violence of Croatian police against migrants on the Balkan Route.
- On 26 February 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [raised concerns](#) on the further shrinking of the civic space in Europe. She denounced in particular the criminalisation of search and rescue in the Mediterranean since 2016 and the Hungarian and Croatian criminalisation of assistance to migrants and of border monitoring organisations. The High Commissioner called on Member States to establish protection through the European Union Pact on Asylum and Migration.

#### **08/02/2021 – 22/02/2021**

- Croatia's Interior Ministry [failed to establish](#) an independent monitoring mechanism at its borders to investigate allegations of human rights violations, following repeated requests by the European Commission and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the last one in November 2020.

#### **21/12 2020 – 8/2 2021**

- On 30 January 2021, four Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group were stopped for several

hours by the Croatian police while they were trying to see what is happening at the border with Bosnia and they were visiting the migrants' dire conditions in the refugee camp in Bihac. Croatian Interior Minister, Davor Bozinovic, [accused the MEPs](#) of "discrediting the country's reputation" and of "provoking" Croatian police. The MEPs stated that an investigation will be requested by European authorities and that migrants are stuck in "inhumane" conditions at the border.

## 21/12 2020 -12/1 2021

- On 23 December 2020, the **Lipa migrant camp** in the Bosnian region of **Bihac**, close to the Croatian border, was [set on fire](#) and destroyed. [After one week](#), the **1,300 migrants** who were hosted there in deplorable conditions are still **without shelter**, together with another **2,000 homeless migrants** at the Bihac border, in an extreme cold weather. Around **10,000 migrants** are [estimated](#) to be stuck in a limbo at the Bosnia-Croatia border, hiding in the woods with no access to food, water, accommodation, healthcare and basic needs and suffering from brutal attacks from the police. The European Union has been supporting Bosnia with EUR 60 million for migration management, asylum and border control and [pledged EUR 25 million more](#). The European Commission [released](#) a statement urging the authorities to find a solution and reopen other migrant facilities and on 3 January [announced](#) an additional €3.5 million in humanitarian aid. While reports of pushbacks along the Balkan route intensifies, with numerous human rights organisations [denouncing](#) illegal pushbacks from Italy to Slovenia and then to Croatia and further back to Bosnia and Herzegovina. A [recent report from the Italian newspaper Avvenire](#) also sheds light on the dangers of those territories which are the world's most dangerous minefields.

## 21/12 2020

- On 11 December 2020, a Syrian asylum applicant and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) [submitted](#) a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee on Croatia's practice of pushbacks. Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) [published](#) on 18 December 2020 a publication on illegal border pushbacks gathering evidence and testimonies of the violence suffered by over 12,000 people across the Balkan Route.

## 12/11 - 24/11 2020

- On the occasion of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (**UPR**) on **Croatia**, several UN member states have made [recommendations](#) regarding “investigations into the use of **excessive force against refugees and other migrants**, ending illegal **deportations**, improving border management in line with international human rights standards, and combating discrimination against refugees and other migrants”.
- The European **Ombudsman’s** Office has [announced](#) that it will open an inquiry into the possible failure of the European Commission to ensure that Croatian authorities respected fundamental rights while conducting EU-funded border operations against migrants and refugees.
- Pressures from Croatian authorities against the partner of a [migrant rights defender](#) and member of the human rights organisation *Are you Syrious*. The partner, an Iraqi refugee in Croatia, saw his refugee status revoked by the Ministry of Interior on 11 May 2020. On 5 November 2020, the appeal hearing into the case was scheduled at the Administrative Court of Zagreb.
- New videos and [reports](#) confirm abuses against migrants by the Croatian police at the Bosnia-Croatian border. A [visual investigation](#) from Border Violence Monitoring Network presents witness testimonies of brutal violence regarding the case of a violent pushback to the Bosnian village of Poljana on March 23rd, 2020. The investigation was published on [Der Spiegel](#).

### 15/10 – 26/10 2020

- The Danish Refugee Council has [documented](#) a series of **brutal pushbacks** that took place on the **Bosnia-Croatian border** between 12 and 16 October 2020. These involved dozens of asylum seekers who have allegedly been whipped, robbed and, in one case, sexually abused by members of the Croatian police. Further [testimonies](#), videos and photos of the violence were also published by the NGO Border Violence Monitoring Network “suggesting that the violence is the product of a concerted effort by the Croatian authorities to deter transit and brutalize groups attempting to make journeys further into Europe”. These types of violations have become “systematic practice of the Croatian police” [denounced](#) the Croatian Centre for Peace Studies, which also organised [a street action](#) in the European square in Zagreb.
- EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, [stated](#) that she will pressure Croatian authorities to investigate reports of pushbacks and inhumane treatment at the Bosnia-Croatian border. Croatian authorities [deny](#) any violence. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, [called on](#) the Croatian authorities to stop

pushbacks and border violence, to ensure full cooperation with independent monitoring mechanisms and to publish the report of the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture on their rapid reaction visit to the country.

- In its [September 2020 Report](#), the NGO Border Violence Monitoring Network documented 40 cases of pushbacks along the Balkan Route and in Greece and analysed how these illegal and violent acts take place and how they impact people-on-the-move.