



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND  
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
G E N E V A**

**No. 78/20**

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the Office of the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and has the pleasure to transmit the response of the Authorities of the Republic of Croatia to the communication with reference UA CRO 1/2020.

The Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment the assurances of its highest consideration.

DS

Geneva, 06 August 2020



**To: Mr. Felipe González Morales  
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants**

**Mr. Nils Melzer  
Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel,  
inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

**Cc: Ms. Beatriz Balbin  
Chief Special Procedures Branch  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**



Zagreb, July 30, 2020

Dear Special Rapporteur Gonzales Morales,  
Dear Special Rapporteur Melzer,

Thank you for your letter of 15 June 2020 expressing concern about reports on alleged use of violence by Croatian law enforcement personnel against migrants on border crossings between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I would like to reaffirm that Croatia takes such allegations very seriously and uses all available measures to investigate them, and to provide appropriate response.

I would also like to stress the fact that Croatia faces numerous challenges by being a part of the Eastern Mediterranean migratory route, and has the longest external border of the EU. Since there are continuous attempts of illegal entry into Croatia, it is our duty, according to the Croatian Constitution, fundamental EU treaties and the Schengen Borders Code, to safeguard our borders, protect our territory from all sorts of illegal crossings, and ensure safety of Croatian and EU citizens.

In this context, Croatia is doing everything to ensure that police actions fully comply with international human rights instruments and standards. In order to ensure that police officers in charge of the state border control respect the fundamental rights of migrants, they undergo relevant training programs. Programs on fundamental rights and on the access to international protection are organized in cooperation with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. Additionally, Croatia established several completely independent monitoring mechanisms in order to monitor police actions at the border.

Our commitment to protecting the rights of migrants is further demonstrated through the support to both the Global Compact for Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Regarding the specific incident you mention in your letter, I would like to inform you that identical claims were also published on 11 June 2020 on the Amnesty International portal in an article entitled "Croatia: Fresh evidence of police abuse and torture of migrants and asylum seekers", following which relevant checks have already been made by the Ministry of the Interior.

The abovementioned article, same as your letter, states that the Croatian police abused 16 Pakistani and Afghan nationals near Lake Plitvice on the night between 26 and 27 May 2020. This information was obtained by talking to 6 migrants from this group and by talking to physicians as well as NGO workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As regards the locations in the Republic of Croatia, the said article mentions only the area near Lake Plitvice. Therefore, our checks were primarily carried out in the area of



Korenica Border Police Station where Lake Plitvice are located. We would like to point out the inconsistency in the article indicating that migrants were treated in the medical clinic in Velika Kladuša which is in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 60km from Lake Plitvice. It is therefore not clear how persons with multiple bone fractures, as indicated in the article, managed to travel such distance.

Two cases were recorded on those dates in the area of Korenica Border Police Station where the police took action with regard to migrants. In the first case, 5 migrants made an application for international protection, one pregnant migrant received medical assistance, and they were accommodated at the Reception Centre for International Protection Applicants. In the second case, police took action with regard to 5 migrants, a physician was called who determined that the migrants were in good health, and the return procedure was initiated. No means of coercion were used against the migrants.

Likewise, the photographs of those migrants were compared with the photographs published in the Amnesty International article and it was established that the migrants with regard to whom the Croatian police took action were not the persons mentioned in the Amnesty International article and your letter.

In any event, it was established that the Croatian police took no action with regard to migrants that could be connected to the incident referred to in the Amnesty International article and the allegations from your letter considering the mentioned information.

All reports regarding the alleged abuse of migrants by the Croatian police have been verified, having in mind the fact that they generally do not contain enough information necessary for investigation, as in this particular case.

In cases of such accusations, one should always keep in mind that there are thousands of migrants at the border of the Republic of Croatia who are constantly trying to illegally enter the EU. The fact that is never mentioned is that migrants are ready to use all means to achieve their goals, even by intentionally risking their own lives and the lives of their family members, knowing that the Croatian police will save their lives when they find themselves in such danger. Furthermore, if the Croatian police prevents their attempts to illegally enter, they are ready to falsely accuse the Croatian police of abuse and of preventing them from accessing the international protection system.

After being injured by accident or in mutual physical conflicts, migrants always claim that they were beaten by the police of the country which they want to enter. For example, Frontex is criticized in Turkey, the North Macedonian police in Greece, the Serbian police in North Macedonia, the Hungarian police in Serbia, the Croatian police in Bosnia and Herzegovina etc. The activists of non-governmental organisations who are not independent and objective journalists regularly note the statements of migrants, present them to the media as facts, and the media publish them with sensationalist headlines.

Hereinafter we cite some articles from the media regarding mutual conflicts and injuring of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

**<https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/masovna-tucnjava-migranata-u-bihacu-u-velikom-obracunu-sudjelovalo-vise-stotina-ljudi-deseci-su-ozlijeđenih-policija-jedva-obuzdala-kaos-8336324>**



02/02/2019 “MASS BRAWL OF MIGRANTS IN BIHAĆ Several hundreds of people participated in a big conflict, dozens injured, police barely curbed chaos”

<https://www.dnevnik.ba/vijesti/video-snimljena-jos-jedna-brutalna-tucnjava-migranata-u-bih>

28/05/2019 “Another brutal fight of migrants recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina”

<https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/masovna-tucnjava-u-migrantskom-kampu-u-bih-jedan-migrant-se-bori-za-zivot/2190335.aspx>

14/06/2020 “Mass brawl in a migrant camp in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one migrant fighting for his life”

<https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/bih-jedan-ilegalni-migrant-ubijen-drugi-ozlijedjen-u-obracunu-u-kampu-kod-bihaca---575826.html>

19/09/2019 One illegal migrant killed, another one injured in a clash in a camp near Bihać

The Croatian police is trained for treating migrants and for identifying persons in need of help and international protection. Multiple cases of saving migrant lives by the border police have been recorded, e.g. due to deep snow, impassable mountains or migrant injuries. Groups of people with frostbites and injuries suffered from falling from cliffs were rescued and considering the inaccessibility of the terrain and deep snow, fire-fighters and members of the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service (HGSS) were involved in some operations.

Hereinafter we cite some articles from the media regarding the rescue of migrants in which the Croatian police participated:

<https://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/clanak/video-pogledajte-kojom-ekstremnom-rutom-migranti-prelaze-u-hrvatsku-gorska-sluzba-spasavanja-strahuje-od-najgoreg-foto-20180913/print>

13/09/2018 “This extreme route is used by migrants to cross into Croatia, HGSS fears the worst. Several hundreds of migrants attempting to illegally cross the Croatian border from the area of the Una-Sana Canton risk their lives daily by walking mountain trails of Plješivica”

<http://www.novolist.hr/Vijesti/Crna-kronika/MIGRANTI-PROBILI-GRANICU-KOD-GOLUBICA-Trudnicu-majku-i-dijete-s-planine-spasio-HGSS>

26/10/2018 “Migrants breached the border near Golubić: HGSS rescued a pregnant woman, a mother and a child from the mountain”

<https://www.24sata.hr/news/zalutali-na-planini-sa-snijezne-pljesivice-spasili-20-migranata-605183>

17/12/2018 “Strayed on the mountain: 20 migrants rescued from snowy Plješivica”

<https://vijesti.rtl.hr/novosti/hrvatska/3321993/krenuli-iz-bih-pjesice-preko-pljesevice-mali-migranti-promzrli-i-kolabirali-odvezli-ih-u-gospicku-bolnicu/>

16/01/2019 “Dramatic rescue: Migrants stuck in deep snow, police officers carried hypothermic children in their arms”

<https://zadarski.slobodnadalmacija.hr/zadar/regional/kod-rudopolja-jedna-osoba-mrtva-policija-zatekla-9-migranata-na-mjestu-dogadaja-596639>

01/04/2019 "One person dead, police encounters 9 migrants at the scene near Rudopolje"

<https://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/mup-javlja-da-su-na-pljesevici-spasili-migranta-koji-je-pao-sa-stijene-i-ozbiljno-se-ozlijedio/>

03/04/2019 "MoI reports that a migrant who fell from a cliff and got seriously injured was rescued on Plješivica"

<https://www.novolist.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/spasavanje-kod-belog-manastira-iz-nabujalog-dunava-hrvatski-policijci-izvukli-16-migranata/>

03/06/2019 "RESCUE NEAR BELI MANASTIR Croatian police officers pulled out 16 migrants from the overflowing Danube"

<https://vijesti.hrt.hr/533649/mup-spasavanje-migranata-na-pljesivici>

07/08/2019 "MoI: Migrants rescued on Plješivica"

<https://riportal.net.hr/video-drama-na-kupi-policija-iz-tonuceg-kombija-izvukla-11-migranata/>

25/08/2019 "During the night, the police tried to stop a van with migrants, but the driver refused to pull over and in the end, the vehicle landed in the river. The police pulled out 11 persons from a sinking van and the driver escaped, the PA sisačko-moslavačka reports"

<https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/415368/1/Migranti-zatvoreni-u-drveni-sanduk-i-ostavljeni-bez-vode-i-zraka>

07/11/2019 "RESCUE ON THE MOTORWAY NEAR ŽUPANJA  
Migrants locked in a wooden trunk and left without water and air"

<https://www.novolist.hr/Vijesti/Crna-kronika/SPASAVANJE-MIGRANATA-Policija-i-HGSS-iz-Mreznice-izvukli-dvojicu-muskaraca-pruzena-im-je-medicinska-pomoc/>

20/11/2019 "MIGRANTS RESCUED Police and HGSS pulled out two men from the Mrežnica River; medical assistance provided to them"

<https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/foto-drama-na-dunavu-policija-spasila-cetvoricu-migranata-plutali-su-po-rijeci-1377047>

04/02/2020 "PHOTO Drama on the Danube: Police rescued four migrants, they floated on the river"

<https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/policija-spasila-cetvero-migranata-iz-rijeke-une---596257.html>

04/03/2020 "Four migrants were rescued by the police from the Una River in H. Kostajnica"

<https://www.novska.in/vijesti/zahvaljujuci-naporima-policijskih-sluzbenika-pu-smz-spaseni-zivoti-migranata>

09/04/2020 "Owing to the efforts of police officers migrant lives rescued"



Finally, please allow me to stress that we place great importance on the work of the Special Rapporteurs on these highly pertinent matters, already shown through open communication on all levels, and we look forward to our future cooperation.

Sincerely yours,



**MINISTER**

**Gordan Grlić Radman**

**Mr Felipe Gonzales Morales**  
**Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants**

**Mr Nils Melzer**  
**Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman**  
**or degrading treatment or punishment**