



### Monthly report on human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Serbia and Macedonia

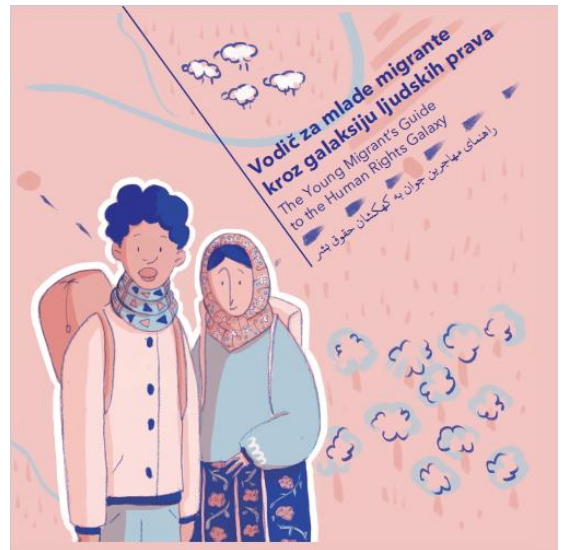
The aim of this Report is to present the current situation regarding the protection of human rights and freedoms of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers passing through, or staying in Serbia and Macedonia. The data in this Report were obtained from 24 civil society organisations from Serbia and Macedonia, within the "Help on the Route" network.

### Situation in Serbia

The trend of increased inflow of refugees and migrants continued in this reporting period. This has led to an extended waiting period for issuing documents at the police, so migrants are waiting for registration for several days in order to be sent to reception and asylum centres without the provided accommodation conditions.

The number of migrants in the park at the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade varies from 20 to 60 people. Most of the newly arriving single men who have come via Macedonia, both minors and adults, are from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Iran. Families living in the park are most often from Iran and Iraq. The number of migrants who came to Serbia from Bulgaria is small.

The number of migrants in Miksalište varies from 40 to 75 people on a daily level, both single individuals and families. Most single individuals (most often from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Algeria and Morocco) who visit Miksalište have been living in Serbia for a long time already. Some of them are accommodated in centres in Belgrade and the surrounding area, while there are also those who come from the centres from Šid with the intention to gather information useful for their departure. There are also families from Iraq (the Kurds who are currently the most numerous), Syria and Iran. They can stay and use the services of Miksalište until 07 p.m., while only new migrants (those who are waiting for a day or two for registration) can stay over night.



*The Young Migrant's Guide to the Human Rights Galaxy, prepared by CZKD (member of HoTR network)*

There were **2,997** of refugees and migrants in Serbia by the end of June (UNHCR data, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Most of them (90%) were accommodated in 18 transit-reception and asylum centres, while around 300 were staying in Belgrade or in the areas close to borders with Croatia and Hungary.

UNHCR noted an increase in new arrivals: from the beginning of June more than 1,000 of them were registered and they came to Serbia mostly from the direction of Macedonia (73%), from the direction of Bulgaria (15%), and by plane (12%).

The enforcement of a new Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection started by the beginning of June. The changes brought about by a new law should improve the existing asylum system. Certain legal provisions allow a better position of the asylum seekers and exercising of a larger set of rights, but also the persons who are recognised the sanctuary or subsidiary protection status. Furthermore, some issues related to procedural law, defining various institutes and mechanisms for the protection of asylum seekers and refugees are more closely determined. The officers of the Asylum Office are given the period of 15 days from the date of receipt of registration and issuing of the certificate on the expressed intention to seek the asylum to conduct the official action of submitting the asylum application. Should the Office fail to comply with this deadline a person concerned is given the possibility to

submit the application personally in writing within the additional period of 8 days. As for certain issues, including this one, it is necessary to draw up by-laws and to regulate them more closely, we cannot yet speak of such a novelty in practice. It is expected that at least some of the novelties will be regulated more closely in the law in the near future, so that the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection can be applied to the full extent.

The problems concerning access to the asylum procedure are still present. Efforts should be made to find the best solutions that would regulate the status of persons already largely integrated into the Serbian society, whose asylum application has been refused or rejected. Also, it is necessary to regulate the legal status of the so-called irregular migrants who have been in Serbia for a long time without much opportunity to exercise their basic rights.

The situation in the reception centres in the south of Serbia is still problematic as persons waiting for certificates of expressed intention to seek asylum stay for more than a few months. Constant postponing of the issue of certificates does not allow these persons to access the asylum procedure. Also, as in the previous period, many beneficiaries who, after being issued the certificate, are sent to reception centres and want to access the asylum procedure, are waiting for several months to be transferred to some of the asylum centres for the purpose of applying for asylum.

### **Accommodation in the reception and asylum centres**

June passed in the sign of Ramadan and Bairam. People were more withdrawn; they were spending time in their rooms and prayed. The heat and the departure of most migrants from the accommodation centres also contributed to "silencing" of the camps. Summer school holiday started for children, which made them happy for a few days, and then they realized they had "nothing to do". Most beneficiaries have difficult times, their time passes slowly, they lack structured activities and do not know how to continue their journey.

Migrants complain that they have no money, and they would like to work to earn at least for the basic necessities.

The tendency to go to Bosnia and Herzegovina from the centres in southern Serbia eased in June, and cases of return were also recorded. According to them, the conditions for life there are poor, and the possibility of legal crossing of the Croatian border is reduced to a minimum.

*"Why do you ask me what's new every day? Every day is the same here. I get up, play football, sit by the computer, sleep and tomorrow it starts all over again!"*  
- N.A. (12)

*„I do not have money either for clothes or even the underwear. The temperatures are getting higher and higher and I am young – it would mean something if I could find a job and have at least a few dinars on me. In my culture, the man is the one who has money, works and earns and I currently have nothing in my pockets, which makes me feel so strange and bad.“*

### **Migrant children at schools**

The number of migrant children in elementary schools was around 300 at the end of the school year, which is a significant decline compared to September 2017.

As it turned out that the inclusion of migrant students has positive effects, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has received significant funds to support schools. Although financial resources are important, schools emphasize that additional human resources would mean more to them. The Ministry seeks to continue providing mentor support and support to co-operation with non-governmental organisations. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to define the role of volunteers and mediators from NGOs, because in some situations too many activities are transferred onto them.

The problem of enrolment in high schools has arisen: only 2-3 children attended classes in secondary school, and it is expected that enrolment in the following year will be sporadic. Where there are secondary schools with places and children who want to enter specific profiles, school administrations should mediate, but this does not guarantee that all children of secondary school age can be assigned in such a way.

During summer, a new enrolment cycle should be prepared for children who will come in the next two months. It is advisable to start some kind of preparation in July already, with children who will be there in the September.

## The situation in Macedonia

In the month of June, the number of refugees who transit through Macedonia remained more or less the same and did not increase significantly. The number of refugees and migrants residing in the transit camps was not higher than 30 in the camp in Gevgelija and 25 in Tabanovce. However, there was a significant increase in the number of refugees that were “deported” back to Greece by the Macedonian police. The countries of origin of refugees who arrived at the camps differ: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Pakistan... Although predominantly single men arrive, it is not rare to see women and children, as well as families among the refugees who arrive. The direction of movement remains the same, i.e. they either come from Serbia after a certain period of stay there and want to go back to Greece or they come from Greece and wish to continue to Serbia.

According to information by the Red Cross, 36 refugees/migrants were registered in the transit camp in Vinojug, Gevgelija and 215 refugees/migrants were registered in the transit camp in Tabanovce, Kumanovo during the month of June. According to the statistics, there were 1,691 refugees/migrants registered by their mobile teams on illegal routes through the country.

The hygiene in both camps is at a satisfactory level. One of the key problems in the transit camp in Tabanovce is the lack of water supply during the whole month of June. IOM is providing water tanks for the refugees who are accommodated in the camp until the problem is solved. All refugees who are accommodated in the camps are immediately provided with hygiene products, water and food, as well as health care when necessary. Not many of them, however, remained for a long period of time. Refugees who stay in the transit camp in Tabanovce receive three meals per day and are satisfied with the food. However, refugees who stay in Gevgelija transit camp complain on the lack of food and poor quality of food they receive.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 93 refugees were caught by the police and “deported” back to Greece. Most of them came from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Algeria. The “deportation” of refugees/migrants who are caught on illegal routes is a continuous daily practice of the police officials in the absence of any official procedure. There is no official statistics available by the Ministry of Interior on how many refugees/migrants have been pushed back. The real number is presumed to be much higher, since some groups are not brought to the transit camps, but directly pushed back to Greece.

One unaccompanied minor originating from Bangladesh submitted an asylum claim and was immediately transferred to the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers.

### Police reports

During June, the police registered 3 cases in its daily reports related to smuggling and refugees/migrants. In the first one, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 a vehicle was pulled-over by the police on the highway Skopje- Shtip. The car did not stop immediately, but after a few kilometers, where the driver left the car and ran away. The police found 9 migrants in the car coming from Bangladesh and Pakistan. In the second case, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, a vehicle was stopped on the Gevgelija- Skopje highway. The drivers escaped and 13 migrants coming from Pakistan were found inside. On June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 the same situation occurred with two vehicles stopped by the mixed patrol teams while travelling from Gevgelija to Skopje. They did not pull over on the stop sign, but continued driving with high speed. When stopped, the drivers of both vehicles escaped and 16 migrants coming from Pakistan (15) and Afghanistan (1) were found inside the vehicles.

The biggest incident reported by the police was a car accident in which, on June 25<sup>th</sup> a car run out of the road and hit the fence on a bridge. There were 23 migrants/refugees coming from Shri Lanka and Bangladesh who were transported in the vehicle. The drivers escaped from the place of the accident. However, two of the migrants in the vehicle died instantly and 12 of them were transferred to the hospital, 6 of whom were with heavy bodily injuries. The police notified that they are taking necessary measures to determine the cause of the accident.

The Ministry of Interior has adopted a new practice in the registration of the migrants/refugees who arrive in the transit camp in Tabanovce. Namely, police officials will now take pictures of everyone who arrives, as well as their fingerprints.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *For Serbia:*

- It is necessary to continue efforts aimed at ensuring the observing of the right to asylum and access to the procedure, as well as efficient asylum procedure and protection of persons who need international protection.
- Adequate protection should be provided to those refugees and migrants who are outside the system, who are not registered or accommodated in the way that will enable them to exercise their basic rights.
- Preventing of smuggling and human trafficking remains high on the list of priorities, with advocating prevention of harassment of refugees and migrants by the authorities or civilians along the refugees' route.
- An efficient providing of comprehensive assistance requires co-ordination of activities between the civil society organisations and service providers from the public sector. The feasibility and impact of activities reach the maximum if they are co-ordinated between all the key stakeholders.
- The activities of information dissemination, linking, learning about and intercultural exchange are of great significance in order to bridge the distance between local and refugee communities. In the context of the beginning of the school year it is important to inform and co-operate with parents of local children and refugee children for the purpose of better preparation and preventing of misunderstanding, prejudice and fear.
- Basic human rights and freedoms of refugees and migrants should be promoted, observed and protected at all times by all the institutions and citizens.
- It is necessary to invest efforts to prevent discrimination towards migrants and to respond adequately to cases of proven discrimination so that they do not repeat.
- There is a large need in the reception and asylum centres to organise free time and provide for occupational, recreational and other activities for migrants.

### *For Macedonia:*

- The practice of illegal "deportation" by the police must be immediately terminated and official channels for the return of refugees among the countries (Greece- Macedonia- Serbia) must be established. This practice and the closed borders are encouraging and paving the way for smugglers' groups putting the refugees in great danger and risk for their lives and physical safety.
- All the deaths among refugees and migrants in the country must be thoroughly investigated and those responsible for it must be punished. The families of the victims must be notified in a proper procedure.
- Water supply must be restored as soon as possible at the transit camp in Tabanovce.

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