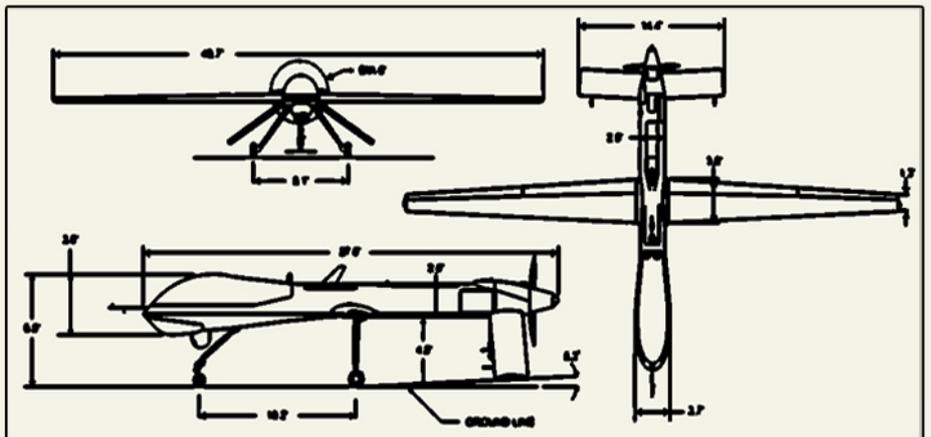
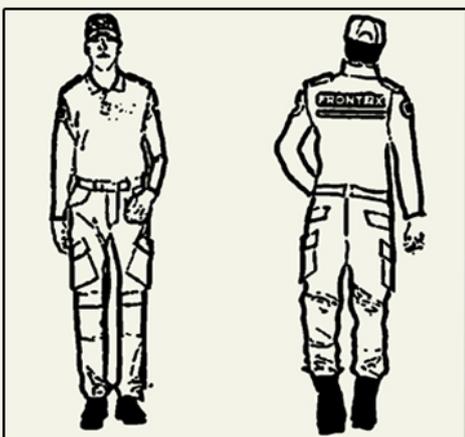
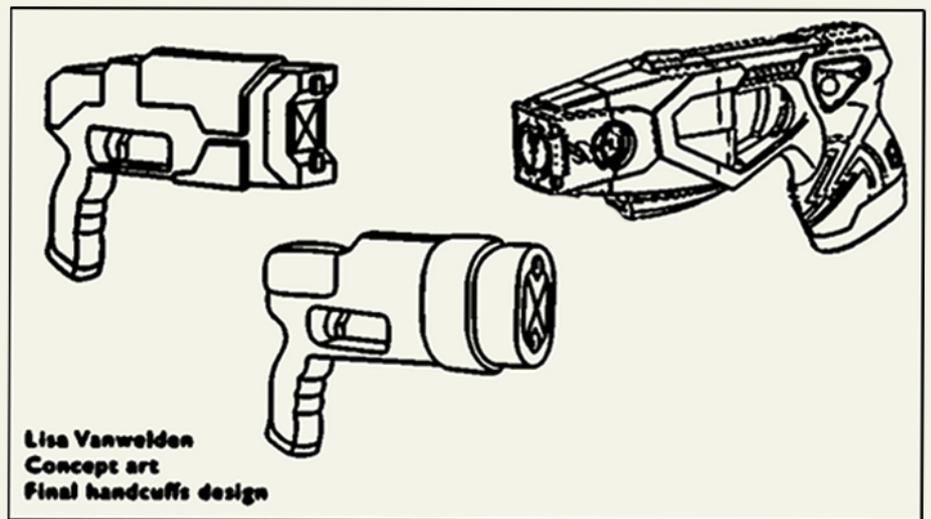
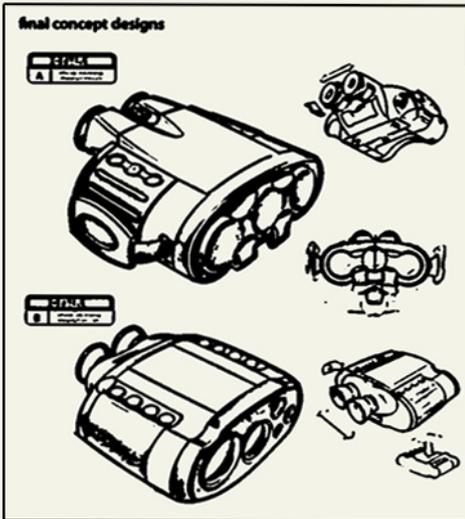
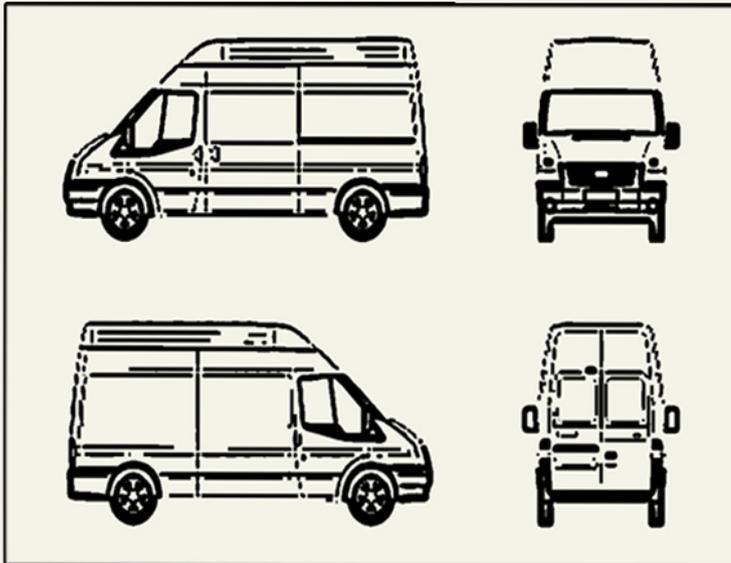




Border Violence Monitoring Network

ILLEGAL PUSH-BACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2021, the Border Violence Monitoring Network Network (BVMN)* collected 44 testimonies, accounting for the experience of 1133 people pushed back across borders in the Balkans. This report highlights the latest trends related to migration policing, offering an eye-level analysis of violent borders all the way from Turkey to Italy.

A particular feature of pushbacks during February was the use of urban policing as a means of capturing and initiating removals. This report analyses pushbacks started from inland cities in Albania and Hungary, showing how private accommodation sites are the target of violent raids which feed directly into cross-border pushbacks. Meanwhile, reception conditions in countries such as Serbia provide an adjoining analysis, showing the way the policing of urban spaces and internal transit represent an extension of border violence.

Reports from last month depict a continually high level of police violence and physical deterrence at transit points across the region. In Bosnia–Herzegovina, respondents reported being attacked by Croatian officers who had entered the territory illegally across the green border. Meanwhile, the fatal weaponization of the border landscape also continues, with a further drowning occurring on the Glina river which sits between the two countries. Within the broader context of adapted geography, this report also looks at fixed border installations like the fence in Evros, discussing the way Greek defences, and repression on the Turkish side of the border, are driving more precarious river crossings.

Internal violence targeting people–on–the–move also persisted throughout February. A horrific attack carried out by members of the public in the Bosnian city of Bihać was the most alarming example of this, and illustrated the way types of violence are being broadcast to garner anti-immigrant sentiment. These overt incidents connect up with a web of other attacks and infringements, as seen with the systematic squat clearances carried out in February in the Una Sana Canton. This report also looks at the way mass evictions are a tool of internal bordering in Greece, seen in the recent targeting of asylum seeker accommodation.

In line with the updates from the land route, the report also looks at the physical and structural violations being faced by people at maritime crossing points. Focus is given to both the situation in regards to Adriatic pushbacks, and the internal process of racial profiling on ferries leaving Samos to mainland Greece. Alongside this is a glossary of testimonies recorded in the last month and a critical update on criminalisation of activists in Trieste.

**BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in Greece and the Western Balkans including No Name Kitchen, Rigardu, Are You Syrious, Mobile Info Team, Disinfaux Collective, Josoor, [re:]ports Sarajevo, InfoKolpa, Centre for Peace Studies, Mare Liberum, IPSIA, Collective Aid and Fresh Response.*



Border Violence
Monitoring Network

F E B R U A R Y
R E P O R T
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REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN is a collaborative project between multiple grassroots organisations and NGOs working along the Western Balkan Route and Greece, documenting violations at borders directed towards people-on-the-move. The members have a common website [database](#), used as a platform to collate testimonies of illegal pushbacks which are gathered through interviews.

TERMINOLOGY

The term *pushback* is a key component of the situation that unfolded along the EU borders (Hungary and Croatia) with Serbia in 2016, after the closure of the Balkan route. Push-back describes the informal expulsion (without due process) of an individual or group to another country. This lies in contrast to the term “deportation”, which is conducted in a legal framework. Push-backs have become an important, if unofficial, part of the migration regime of EU countries and elsewhere.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological process for these interviews leverages the close social contact that we have as independent volunteers with refugees and migrants to monitor push-backs at multiple borders. When individuals return with significant injuries or stories of abuse, one of our violence reporting volunteers will sit down with them to collect their testimony. Although the testimony collection itself is typically with a group no larger than five persons, the pushback groups which they represent can be as large as 50 persons. We have a standardised framework for our interview structure which blends the collection of hard data (dates, geo-locations, officer descriptions, photos of injuries/medical reports, etc.) with open narratives of the abuse.

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	-	Bosnia and Herzegovina
HR	-	Croatia
SRB	-	Serbia
SLO	-	Slovenia
ROM	-	Romania
HUN	-	Hungary
ITA	-	Italy
BGR	-	Bulgaria
MNK	-	North Macedonia
GRK	-	Greece
TUR	-	Turkey
EU	-	European Union

TRENDS IN BORDER VIOLENCE

SERIOUS INJURY DURING HUNGARIAN PUSHBACK

In February, BVMN members collected a testimony of a pushback involving a 23 year old man from Iran who sustained a serious injury to his leg during a police raid of the hotel where he was staying in Budapest (see [1.2](#)). The respondent reported that he broke his leg after jumping out of a window while trying to avoid apprehension by the Hungarian police. Officers stormed the accommodation at midnight, detaining around 20 people—on-the-move during the process with the use of physical violence. Unable to walk due to the fall, the injured respondent managed to hide at the rear of the building, before returning to his hotel room. Upon return he was forced by the staff to pay for another night and for the door lock broken by the officers during the raid.

The raiding of hotels suspected of hosting people-on-the-move seems to be an increasing practice across the region, as analysed in another section of this report regarding pushbacks from Albania. However, many specifics of the practice remain unknown and may vary across countries and localities. In particular, it is unclear whether hotel owners and landlords cooperate directly with the police. What can be said is that these raids do bear many similarities to the forms of aggressive urban policing used by border agencies across Europe in order to arrest, detain and remove undocumented people. While this urban aspect of pushbacks has not been previously explored in depth, research into fatalities caused by authorities carrying out formal deportations, such as the [UK Border Force](#), show similar levels of severe injury and death – with multiple incidents of people jumping from windows or committing suicide in order to evade capture and deportation.

In this recent case, despite evading the first raid, the Hungarian police reportedly came back two hours later, and escorted the respondent in an ambulance to Péterfy hospital. Upon arrival, and in the presence of a translator, the respondent asked for asylum and was told by the police officer:

“there is no asylum in Hungary”.

The respondent was then examined and kept in the ward for three days, under constant guard of two police officers who confiscated his mobile devices. The respondent described how the officers present were gatekeepers to his care, and the doctors in the ward had to ask their permission every time they administered any medication. After these three days, he was told that he needed surgery. When he stated that he did not have the financial means to cover the cost, he was pushed back to Serbia the next morning and made to pay for crutches on the way to the border.

Pushbacks of people in need of medical care are not isolated events and have been documented by BVMN before, including the [case](#) of a Moroccan man who was sent back to Turkey through the Evros river while he had large pieces of exposed metal bolted in his leg and was in need of further surgery. These reports raise questions about the role of other civil institutions and societal actors in the border regime. In particular, the invasion of medical spaces is of grave concern because it may prompt vulnerable populations to no longer seek life-saving medical support. Combined with the attacks on hotels, the transit landscape and access to support is increasingly weighted against people-on-the-move.

MASS EXPULSIONS FROM DURRËS, ALBANIA

In February, BVMN also documented an emerging trend of hotel raids by the Albanian police, resulting in the pushback of groups to Greece. Based on multiple testimonies (see [8.1](#), [8.2](#), & [8.3](#)) involving approximately 200 people, these events occurred in Durrës, a port city in western Albania. The cases evidence a strong pattern: at dawn, Albanian police arrive at the hotel, all people-on-the-move are cleared from the building, they are placed into vans, brought to an informal site on the Greek-Albanian border and pushed back.

The location at the centre of this practice, referred to as the “Atlin Hotel”, appears to provide low-cost lodging to people-on-the-move in the southern part of Durrës. Particularly in the winter months, access to such affordable shelter (reportedly a four-person room costs €10.00 per night) is a vital lifeline; offering warmth, electricity, and washing facilities.

But in recent weeks this seemingly safe space has been upended. During the evictions, Albanian police officers assemble in large numbers and ready vans to load the hotel guests, alluding to the premeditated nature of the operations. The police then seize people-on-the-move staying inside, rushing their exit and denying them time to gather their winter clothing, sleeping bags, money and even passports.

The catalyst for these acts remains unclear, though one respondent subject to a raid said local law enforcement were acutely aware of

the hotel as a hosting space, and that prior interventions had been made to remove certain people-on-the-move seen as disruptive. Another respondent also alleged that the owner of the hotel was in direct contact with the police, though as with the cases in Hungary this link is uncorroborated.

What is explicitly clear, is the violent outcome of the raids. Groups removed from Durrës report being driven to mountainous areas on the Greek-Albanian border and pushed back. One group of eight people ejected in this way described trekking through the snow in T-shirts for three days, after being abandoned by Albanian officers. As BVMN has previously explored in other border locations, this mimics a broader weaponisation of geography against transit communities which places them at direct risk of hypothermia.

Violence punctuates every part of these incidents: whether it be the unannounced police raids, collective expulsion at the green border, or the long return journey within Greece without proper clothing. Perhaps most discouraging is the destabilisation of supposed spaces of respite (such as hotels/private accommodation), yet another example of the extension of pushbacks from the immediate border area into the urban interior. Interrogating these alterations in civilian architecture, and their growing role in policing and surveillance, is key to understanding the way pushbacks interlock with other spheres of policing and repression against people-on-the-move.



Port of Durrës on the Adriatic coast (Source:[Exit News](#))

MARITIME REMOVALS TO PATRAS

In Patras, starting from the beginning of the new year, there have been some changes especially regarding attempted border crossings to Italy, the repression of these acts, and consequently also in the approach of transit communities to this practice. In fact, since January, the number of people reaching Italy has drastically decreased, with one 20 day window seeing only three successful crossings. The cause of this is related to a resurgence of the repressive tactics used inside the port by Greek authorities, which in turn has generated a climate of general fear and insecurity. In some cases this has also led to an increase in registrations or asylum requests within Greece by the transit community in Patras, prompted by a growing concern over the viability of crossings in the Adriatic.

Even within the lull in crossings, a pushback from Bari to Patras was recorded in February (see [7.1](#)). The respondent, an Afghan minor, was able to disembark the “Superfast” ship he had boarded in Greece, but on arrival was stopped by Italian police in a park in the city of Bari. He was searched by officers and identified by means of his white card issued in Greece. After this, the minor was detained in the police station for a short time, and forced to sign documents in Italian without the presence of a translator. Despite asking for asylum the respondent was ignored, and felt that the officers took advantage of his inability to speak English.

In recent weeks, there has been a partial shift, with the later part of February seeing more people attempting and achieving crossings. Yet this outlook has also been tempered by the alleged continuation of deep interior

pushbacks from the western port cities of Greece to Turkey. Anecdotal evidence shared by one minor states that in recent months, more people have been seized in the port of Igoumenitsa and driven east across the Greek mainland to Turkey. It is also suggested that some people impacted in this process have also been subject to prior returns from Italy, making these events lengthy chain pushbacks. The risk of apprehension and removal to Turkey from the west of Greece has precedence, with a case from [May 2020](#) detailing the way people in Igoumenitsa were pushed back, even those with white cards.



*Superfast vessel docked on the Adriatic sea
(Source: [BVMN](#))*

BORDER INCURSIONS NEAR IZAČIĆ

Despite increasing violence and pushbacks along the Croatian border, people-on-the-move in Bihać (BiH) still try to cross in search of a better life in the EU. On 21st February a group were attempting such a journey, and had stopped for a break in the forest close to the border area in Izačić, intending to wait for nightfall. At dusk they were startled by a gunshot and saw a dozen Croatian police officers in black uniforms and balaclavas entering Bosnian territory from three different points. The group, frightened by the gunshots, fled back towards Bihać, leaving all their personal belongings behind. According to the respondent the officers, who's uniforms matched the description of Interventna division, captured two persons from the group before they could escape and beat them inside of Croatian territory. The respondent stated that the two people had returned to their squat in the following days, and bore serious physical injuries from the ultimate pushback.

This is not the first time that there have been incidents where Croatian police have made incursions into Bosnian territory. In 2019, local citizens of the Poljana area reported Croatian officers [firing guns](#) across the border while chasing a group of 27 people-on-the-move. A [BVMN report](#), which corroborated an investigation by [news portal Zurnal](#),

also showed armed officers chasing transit groups across the border, leading to an altercation with the BiH police. In an even more overt transgression, the presence of [Croatian police officers in civilian clothes](#) was reported in the area of Cazin. Despite the fact that current law states that no foreign police officer, in an official vehicle, may enter BiH territory unannounced, such incidents often occur with [little action taken](#) against the Croatian authorities.

In contrast to these earlier cases, the latest incursion of Croatian officers into Bosnian territory marks a new escalation of pushback practices. Rather than pushing people-on-the-move into Bosnian territory, it appears that Croatian authorities carried out a "pre-emptive" pushback. In the process, HR police not only violated Bosnian territory before any border crossing had taken place, but they, in a bitter irony, appeared to have brought people-on-the-move into Croatian territory in order to physically harm them before pushing them back. The practice of the Croatian police to selectively enforce and ignore border 'rules' in order to facilitate the EU' exclusionary regime, often in blatant violation of international law, is a clear sign that these rules primarily serve to reinforce existing power structures.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION

SERBIA

INTERNAL TRANSIT LOOPS



Luke Čelović Park in Belgrade (Source: [zvucnamapabeograda](https://zvucnamapabeograda.com/))

It is not hard to spot who, among the people-on-the-move who gather in Park Luke Čelovića in Belgrade, Serbia, has recently come back from the Romanian border. Some have walked for 24–36 hours, their shoes are worn away, and their trousers are covered in mud. Others return to Belgrade with taxis that were waiting for them in Serbian towns along the border and charge extortionate amounts of money for a ride back to the city. Few have jackets, as the Romanian police often take them and even burn them (see [2.1](#)), before pushing them back to Serbia. All show signs of exhaustion and fatigue.

No matter how traumatic the pushback they were subject to, the goal remains to recuperate as fast as possible and return to the border again. Among other things, this involves obtaining a jacket and an appropriate pair of shoes, as well as a phone (for those who can afford it). Those with the means to do so may try the “game” twice a week. Making the process of pushbacks all the more cyclical and draining.

In the intervening period, people take what rest they can in improvised shelters around the city. A large number of the transit groups in Park Luke, and around the bus station of Belgrade, prefer to stay out of official camps. Most of them defer to squats around the park, or even under bridges, for the few days that are necessary to recover the inventory of items stolen or destroyed by the Romanian police.

This turn-around is not quick, however, for people that suffered injuries at the border – often causing lasting damage to their mobility. Unfortunately, it is not rare to see broken feet or leg injuries, which force people into extended stays in Belgrade. With extremely narrow access to healthcare, recovery is often only partial, and longer and more painful than it should be. Material deprivation, lack of adequate accommodation, barriers to internal transit and lack of medical support all form contours of the slow violence of pushbacks, which makes itself felt long after the incident.

BOSNIA-HERZEGONIVA

SQUAT CLEARANCES AND POLICE VIOLENCE

At sunrise on 24 February, in Bihać, another large eviction took place by local special forces in coordination with the Service for Foreign Affairs of BiH (SFA). Special Forces officers went to two abandoned buildings, known as “Krajina Metal” and the “Dom Pensioniera”, with black vans, police jeeps and five buses, removing hundreds of people who had been using them as temporary shelter. About 200 people were transferred to camp Lipa, which since the fire in December, has now come under direct management of the SFA.

Una Šana Canton (USC) police spokesperson, Ale Siljdedić, stated that the relocation to Lipa was action was taken to ensure better living conditions for the transit community forced to live in dilapidated structures. Siljdedić added that people will be housed at the Lipa camp *“where they are provided with hot meals, clothes and shoes, and living conditions in heated areas, medical care and personal hygiene areas”*. But conditions in

camp Lipa are no better than in the squats. The camp is overcrowded, many tents lack beds and the meals provided are insufficient. In terms of sanitary conditions there is also a major deficit, with only a dozen chemical toilets for more than a thousand people. But aside from the poor amenities, the camp also embodies a lack of autonomy that leads many to reside in squats – not least to avoid the control of access, space and resources by the SFA and police.

Those taken to Lipa in late February were held in an area near the SFA office, while some were registered for camp ID cards. But by late morning on the same day, most had taken the road to Bihać and returned to the squats. However, observers noted that in the aftermath, a significant rise in controls had been implemented. For instance, the abandoned factory of Krajina Metal, was controlled for days by local police and Special Forces who prevented journalists, humanitarian organisations and activists from entering.



Special police evicting people from Dom Pensioniera in central Bihać (Source:[Altreconomia](https://www.altreconomia.org/))

While the scale of these evictions was significant, they are neither new nor isolated incidents. Across the border area, people-on-the-move face continual pressure on their access to shelter, with many cases of police violence occurring during raids on abandoned buildings. One incident recorded by BVMN from 21st January illustrates these abuses. A group of 17 men and one minor (from Yemen and Morocco) were waiting in an abandoned house in the border area, resting before continuing onto Croatia. Suddenly, two police cars arrived, carrying two Bosnian officers in dark uniforms and two plain clothes officers. The officers ordered the inhabitants of the house to each pay 50 €, before stealing their power banks and phones – the good ones the police put into their own pockets, the bad ones they destroyed. The officers also searched the people for weapons and found one nail clipper owned by the minor. The respondent described how the officers punished him for having this “weapon” by beating him to the point where he reportedly lost consciousness. When his companions asked to assist

the minor, the officers denied the support and shouted “*We will finish you!*”, while pointing handguns at the group.

The inhabitants were then ordered to undress and lay down on the floor, with their hands folded behind their heads. Lying in this position, the police started beating them on the back with fists and batons. While beating and insulting the people on the floor, the respondent said that the police officers were dancing and singing, deriving enjoyment from the situation.

“After the police were gone, we laid there for 15 more minutes without moving because we were so afraid that if we started moving, they would come back at us and punish us for moving.”

These incidents show that eviction practices are not meant to provide vulnerable populations with more sustainable living arrangements, but are better understood as violence designed to make life unbearable for people-on-the-move.

VIOLENT ATTACK IN BIHAĆ

On 10th February 2021, two men were [brutally attacked in Bihać](#) by a local group whose members claimed to be “taking revenge” for a clash that had occurred earlier between members of the transit community and local people. Alvir Gverić was among the local people involved in the prior fight, and his brother, Mirhad Gverić, was alleged to have been looking for “justice” when he led a group of others in this horrific ambush. According to the investigators, Mirhad Gverić already had a criminal record, having been previously convicted and prosecuted for “violent behavior,” and “attempts to smuggle migrants.”

In a video taken by the aggressors and described in the [article by Istraga](#), it is possible to identify “at least five people beating two migrants, who are begging for help, with their fists, legs and batons.” “You’re going to beat our children,” the man said, while recording one of the victims lying on the ground. The performative nature of this incident stands out, as it was recorded with phones and later posted on social media by the attackers themselves, [with the message](#): “those who defend migrants in public should see this.”

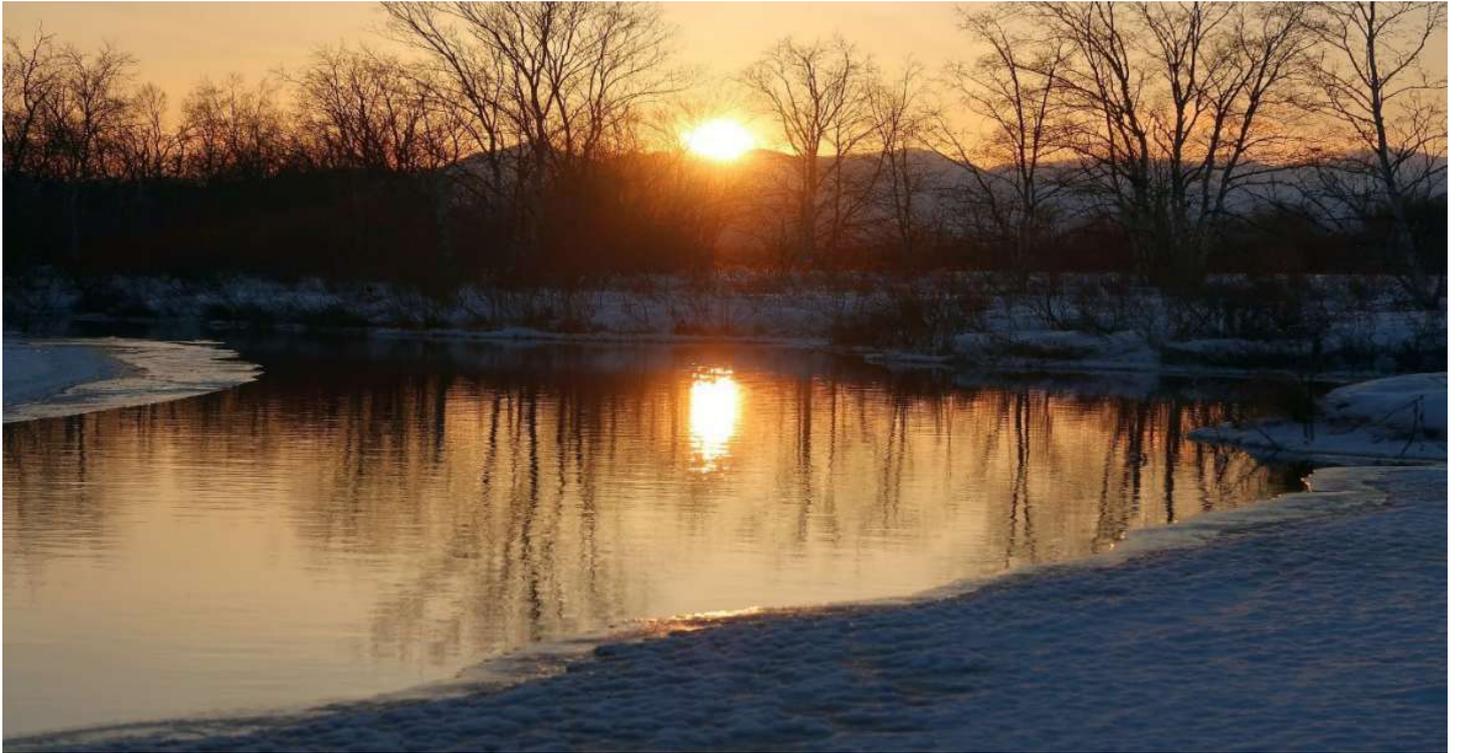
Demonstrative acts of extreme violence like this are not restricted to Bosnia–Herzegovina.

In [May 2020](#) in Serbia, a man drove his car into a migrant reception center in Obrenovac (Belgrade), filming himself live on Facebook while shouting racist messages against people-on-the-move. In addition, these incidents of internal violence by the public need to be understood in the context of the systemic violence exhibited by authorities against people-on-the-move both within countries and in border areas. Such behavior by authorities serves to legitimize vigilante actions. As stated by [Transbalkanska Solidarnost](#), it is a serious and continuous concern for human rights and justice that:

“[n]o person registered on the Una-Sana Canton territory, but also in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been punished so far for violence against migrants. Does this mean that the authorities support the violence against migrants?”

CROATIA

DROWNING IN THE GLINA RIVER



The Glina river bordering HR and BiH (Source: [Total Croatia News](#))

On 14th February 2021, the body of a Turkish person was found in the river Glina, which marks part of the border between Croatia and BiH. As [Total Croatia News reports](#), the man was among a transit group that attempted to cross the Glina river two nights earlier. Nighttime darkness made it difficult to gauge the water's depth. In addition, extremely low temperatures may have contributed to the man's death. His body was ultimately found by Croatian officials and the case was handed over to the State Prosecutor's Office of BiH.

paths, prompting many transit groups to [ford rivers](#) rather than cross bridges, even if members of the groups are unable to swim. In addition, the frequent removal and burning of clothes by Croatian officials increases the risk of hypothermia and subsequent illnesses for transit groups -- a risk that is exacerbated by winter temperatures. This latest death was not a tragic accident. It was caused by the interaction of a hostile environment in BiH and brutal border practices by Croatian authorities.

This tragic yet entirely preventable death needs to be seen in the context of the equally preventable disaster that is playing out in BiH's North-Western Una Sana Canton. Following the closure of camp Bira in Bihać, the outbreak of a huge destructive [fire in Lipa](#), and a wider deterioration of medical services and other support systems in USC, people-on-the-move have an ever narrowing tenure within the canton. For many, this means continuing attempts to cross the border with Croatia, despite the added challenges of winter. During and after the crossing, practices by Croatian authorities, especially the ever-present fear of pushbacks, are forcing people-on-the-move along ever more remote

ITALY

ACTIVISTS IN TRIESTE CRIMINALISED

In Trieste, at dawn on the 23rd February 2021, the [Italian police broke into the home](#) of Gian Andrea Franchi and Lorena Fornasir, which also acts as the headquarters of the Linea d'Ombra ODV association, which since 2019 has been involved in supporting people-on-the-move arriving from the Balkan route. The officers notified Gian Andrea of the charge, aiding illegal immigration for profit, which represents a baseless slur on the work of Linea d'Ombra and part of a wider trend of criminalisation of solidarity.

The authorities confiscated telephones, a computer and a hard disk, as well as some of the association's accounting books. The accusation centres on an episode dating back to July 2019 where Gian Andrea helped an Iranian Kurdish family, who had already been in Trieste, by welcoming them into his home and helping them to withdraw money sent by relatives through the Western Union service.

The outrage felt after this slanderous attack has raised a wave of solidarity towards Gian

Andrea, Lorena and Linea d'Ombra, from all over Italy and the Balkans. With the same charges, thousands of people who stand in solidarity with people-on-the-move could be investigated for simple gestures of assistance. In fact, police raids against activists is a growing phenomena, and was replicated on the evening of 1st March, when four members of Mediterranea – the association that owns the [Mare Jonio rescue boat](#) – were also charged with aiding and abetting illegal immigration.

In protest against the criminalization of solidarity and in support of Gian Andrea and the four of the Mediterranea, the Linea d'Ombra assembly [launched a statement](#) that collected nearly 1,200 signatures in just four days. Together with ASGI and Caterina Bove, appointed legal representative, the legal defense of the Trieste based activist is currently being prepared. As noted by [Gian Andrea in a statement](#), this is primarily a political battle, and not one based on upholding the law.

GREECE

EVICIONS OF ACCOMMODATION ACROSS GREECE

With the end of the [Filoxenia program](#), through which the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) hosted asylum seekers/refugees in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Corinth, [6,898 people](#) are now at risk of eviction. Many of those accommodated within these structures are in the final stages of the asylum process, waiting for their ID cards and travel documents. The process to obtain such documents can take months if not years, while making it more complicated for people to legally work, rent a flat, or obtain health insurance. Stuck in administrative limbo, unable to leave Greece, and held back by structural failures that make it difficult to integrate and be self-sufficient in Greece, the risk for street homelessness and further exploitation is dangerously high.

Towards the end of February, several IOM hotels in Thessaloniki and Athens were [forcibly evicted](#). In Thessaloniki, people were forced to board busses to go to Athens, and told in some cases by IOM staff to "*go to Viktoria Square [Athens] to protest*", alluding to a similar situation that occurred in the summer of 2020, when hundreds of families oc-

cupied the square, and were routinely attacked by police. In Athens, the Achillion Hotel was forcibly evicted, with police dragging out those who refused to leave.

The weekend of the 26th of February, [several families slept again on Viktoria Square](#). As the number of families in the square grew from Friday to Sunday police presence and [harassment](#) increased, against both people-on-the-move and those expressing solidarity. On Sunday night (28th February), the [families were taken](#) to Amygdaleza detention centre by the police. There is no legal basis for their detention and no information has been given on the duration they will be held. They were not informed where they were going, and when the police were asked, they said the people would be taken to a camp, and would be given housing after. This has not occurred to date.

In addition to mass evictions by the IOM, smaller NGOs which provide housing are following suit to evict people-on-the-move. This appears to be partially due to increased

pressure by the Greek Government on NGOs operating in the field of migration, and partially, it may reflect changes in the approaches of larger actors/institutional approaches to migration and asylum in Greece.

As the weather gets warmer and more evictions are planned and are carried out, there is increasing concern that hundreds if not thousands will be sleeping in the streets this spring and summer.



People on the street in Corinth (Source: [Popular Rally of Corinth](#))

SAMOS: UNLAWFUL TRAVEL BANS AND RACIAL PROFILING

Since the introduction of Covid-19 measures in November 2020, [travel restrictions](#) have been imposed on the entire Greek territory. Despite these restrictions, Samos, contrarily to the rest of the Administrative District of Northern Aegean, had been explicitly excluded from the travel ban, due to the '[state of emergency](#)' that has been in place since the 6.6 magnitude earthquake on 30th October.

For Samos, this exemption means that [supporting documents](#), such as proof of address, permanent residence or reason of travel, are not required to travel in and out of the island. However, there have been multiple incidents of unlawful travel bans imposed on individuals within the refugee and migrant community. People with refugee status who have the legal right to leave Samos and wish to travel to mainland Greece via ferry, have been forced by the Hellenic Coast Guard to show supporting documents when travelling, and eventually banned from boarding the ferry despite holding a valid ticket. Additionally,

the tickets were not reimbursed when people were unlawfully banned from leaving Samos.

It is important to note that there are no similar requirements for Greek nationals and EU citizens. This differentiation of treatment by the authorities towards the refugee and migrant community constitutes direct discrimination through racial profiling. This discrimination violates individuals access to goods, services and rights and is unlawful under both [Greek Law 4443/2016](#) and [EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC](#). Racial profiling, as exemplified by the unlawful travel bans imposed on the refugee and migrant community, also violates the right to equality before the law and protection against discrimination. Yet the practice continues to this day, in spite of the official complaints made by legal actors on the island.

TURKEY

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE GREEK-TURKISH LAND BORDER

At the end of January, the construction of the new fence on the land border between Greece and Turkey, initially [announced](#) by the Greek government in August 2020, was completed. In October 2020, a government spokesperson [specified](#) the barbed wire fence erected in 2012 was fortified with a new, higher fence erected behind the old one. This was done along a 10km stretch around the border crossing Kastanies/Pazarkule, where thousands of people had been stranded in [March 2020](#) following the dispute over the EU-Turkey deal. In addition, a surveillance system, including thermal cameras, has now been installed. As yet, it is still unclear whether the planned 26km long extension of the fence has now been completed. Meanwhile, the largest part of the 200km border remains without a fence, divided geographically by the Evros/Meriç river.

While many groups report that the Turkish border forces still do not prevent and often-times even facilitate crossings to Greece along the Evros/Meriç river, several people-on-the-move have reported to BVMN member Josoor that their attempt to climb the

fence at the land border had been thwarted by Turkish forces. One group reported that they had successfully climbed the fence but were apprehended by Greek soldiers shortly after. In a new development, this group was subsequently not detained (as in most cases), but rather pushed back directly at the official border crossing of Kastanies/Pazarkule.

Despite the erection of the new fence, crossings have increased significantly over the course of the last month, which is believed to be due to the warmer weather. Subsequently, BVMNs field teams operating in the area have recorded a more than two-fold increase in pushbacks from Greece to Turkey. The use of Evros/Meriç islands (see [11.6](#)), described in the [November](#) report, has been continually present in testimonies from February. Meanwhile the alleged involvement of Frontex personnel (see [11.2](#)) being present during and involved in pushbacks in the area has been present in many testimonies collected throughout February. This illustrates the continuation of a trend which was increasingly documented in the last part of 2020 by BVMN members.



Fence on the Greek-Turkish border (Source: Josoor)

GLOSSARY OF REPORTS, FEBRUARY 2021

In February 2021, BVMN gathered testimonies of 44 pushbacks, impacting 1133 people-on-the-move. Those affected by these incidents included men, women, children with guardians and unaccompanied children. They also represent a wide demographic, including people from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Kurdistan, Somalia and Chad.

-10 pushbacks to Serbia (1 chain from Slovenia, 2 from Croatia, 4 from Hungary, and 3 from Romania)
 -18 pushbacks to Bosnia-Herzegovina (3 chains from Slovenia, and 15 from Croatia)
 -7 pushbacks to Greece (1 from Italy, 3 from Albania, 1 from North Macedonia, and one chain from Serbia)
 -9 pushbacks to Turkey (all directly from Greece)

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
HUNGARY TO SERBIA				
1.1	4 th February	5 th February	8	Afghanistan
1.2	7 th February	13 th February	1	Morocco
1.3	17 th February	20 th February	2	Afghanistan
1.4	27 th February	27 th February	30	Afghanistan, Iran
ROMANIA TO SERBIA				
2.1	30 th January	2 nd February	10	Iran, Afghanistan
2.2	23 rd January	31 st January	17	Afghanistan, Pakistan
2.3	1 st February	3 rd February	18	Afghanistan
SLOVENIA TO SERBIA				
3.1	27 th January	29 th January	5	Afghanistan
CROATIA TO SERBIA				
4.1	3 rd February	5 th February	3	Afghanistan
4.2	4 th February	5 th February	3	Afghanistan
SLOVENIA TO BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
5.1	24 th January	13 th February	1	Morocco
5.2	6 th January	2 nd February	20	Bangladesh
5.3	6 th February	23 rd February	4	Morocco
CROATIA TO BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA				
6.1	9 th February	18 th February	7	Iran, Afghanistan
6.2	18 th January	8 th February	3	Iran
6.3	28 th January	9 th February	6	Afghanistan, Pakistan
6.4	30 th January	3 rd February	3	Morocco
6.5	2 nd February	21 st February	14	Afghanistan
6.6	2 nd February	9 th February	80	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran
6.7	3 rd February	17 th February	2	Algeria
6.8	6 th February	9 th February	10	Afghanistan, Pakistan
6.9	7 th February	9 th February	5	Afghanistan, Pakistan

LINK	INCIDENT	RECORDED	GROUP	DEMOGRAPHIC
6.10	9 th February	10 th February	6	Bangladesh
6.11	13 th February	18 th February	40	Afghanistan, Pakistan
6.12	15 th February	16 th February	4	Afghanistan, Pakistan
6.13	16 th December	17 th February	4	Morocco
6.14	4 th November	20 th February	4	Bangladesh
6.15	26 th February	27 th February	5	Afghanistan
ITALY TO GREECE				
7.1	14 th February	17 th February	1	Afghanistan
ALBANIA TO GREECE				
8.1	18 th January	16 th February	11	Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia
8.2	19 th February	25 th February	40	Morocco, Algeria
8.3	20 th February	3 rd March	50	Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco
SERBIA TO GREECE				
9.1	15 th June	3 rd February	25	Morocco
NORTH MACEDONIA TO GREECE				
10.1	15 th January	25 th January	6	Tunisia
10.2	12 th February	15 th February	4	Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia
GREECE TO TURKEY				
11.1	27 th January	9 th February	4	Palestine, Somalia
11.2	4 th February	5 th February	60	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia
11.3	5 th February	10 th February	100	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Somalia, Chad
11.4	11 th February	15 th February	120	Syria, Algeria
11.5	12 th February	13 th February	17	Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Algeria
11.6	16 th February	17 th February	50	Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Kurdistan
11.7	17 th February	18 th February	140	Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia
11.8	18 th February	20 th February	130	Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Algeria
11.9	18 th February	19 th February	60	Afghanistan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria

FIND ALL REPORTS ON THE DATABASE [HERE](#)

NETWORK STRUCTURE AND CONTACT

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BVMN is based on the horizontal participation of member organisations in the field of documentation, advocacy, media and litigation. The Network receives funds through charitable grants and donations from supporters. The funds primarily cover transport subsidies for volunteers in the field and staff costs.

To follow more from the Border Violence Monitoring Network, check out our [website](#) for the entire testimony archive, previous monthly reports and regular news pieces. To follow us on social media, find us on Twitter handle [@Border Violence](#) and on [Facebook](#). For further information regarding this report or more on how to become involved please email us at mail@borderviolence.eu. For press and media requests please contact: press@borderviolence.eu



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