

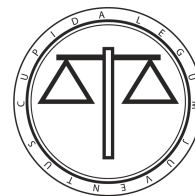
Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

FIELD REPORT 2017

May - June - July

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Over the course of the months of May, June and July the main challenges continued to be those of continuous deportations of refugees and migrants to Greece and access to the asylum procedure in Macedonia. Moreover in this period the number of push backs from Serbia increased as it was evident by the larger number of people accommodated in the transit center on the north-east border.

MAY

TC Tabanovce

In TC Tabanovce, during May, there were no particular developments and no changes in the practices of the institutions. The official number of refugees who are staying in TC Tabanovce in May was 17.

During May the push backs from Serbia continued, and there was an increase in the number of pushed back per-

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sons in comparison to the previous months. In addition to this the number of refugees arriving irregularly from Greece increased as well. The NGOs that monitor the hotspots for irregular border crossings in the area, unofficially informed us that the total number of refugees residing in the villages of Lojane and Vaksince is approximately 478 persons, of those 300 are newcomers.

Like in previous months no one is allowed to enter the transit center except vulnerable groups who are allowed entrance only for few hours to be provided with food and medical assistance. Since the institutions are not allowing refugees to enter in the transit center the number of people that are staying in the railway continue to increase. During May approximately 120 persons could be seen in the vicinities of TC Tabanovce

MYLA lawyer interviewed 3 persons who were not allowed to enter the transit center and informed them about the asylum procedure in Macedonia but all of them continue their journey to find a way to reach one of the EU countries. In addition to this 4 other persons were informed about the asylum procedure. A total of 7 persons were offered legal assistance during May in TC Tabanovce.

There were 4 unaccompanied minors residing in TC Tabanovce during May, the officials appointed a guardian for all of them. One of the unaccompanied minors applied for asylum and was accommodated in a special facility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy intended for vulnerable groups of individuals in Skopje. During the reporting period 2 persons were in a procedure for voluntary return to the country of origin.

TC Vinojug

During May the situation in TC Vinojug was more than calm. The majority of the people that were offered legal assistance in TC Vinojug were persons that were caught by the Macedonian Police in an attempt to enter Macedonia irregularly and were taken back to the transit center site to be questioned/profiled and later on deported to Greece. In total **20** persons from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon have been deported to Greece in May.

All of the refugees tried to cross the border with the help of smugglers. This month the number of irregular border crossings is the lowest in comparison to previous months and the reason for this is unknown.

MYLA's field lawyers gave all refugees legal assistance on the asylum procedure in Macedonia. During May the situation in TC Vinojug was more than calm. The majority of the people that were offered legal assistance in TC Vinojug were persons that were caught by the Macedonian Police in an attempt to enter Macedonia irregularly and were taken back to the transit center site to be questioned/profiled and later on deported to Greece. In total 20 persons from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon have been deported to Greece in May.

During May the number of persons accommodated in TC Vinojug was 9 persons.

All of the refugees tried to cross the border with the help of smugglers. This month the number of irregular border crossings is the lowest in comparison to previous months and the reason for this is unknown. MYLA's field lawyers gave all refugees legal assistance on the asylum procedure in Macedonia. In addition to this they were interested in knowing more about the reception conditions of asylum seekers, the integration process and in particular social security in Macedonia.

During May the number of persons accommodated in TC Vinojug was 9 persons. Six of the remaining persons are in the procedure for family reunification and 3 are still here due to medical issues.

On May 18th, the family from Iraq who have applied for the procedure of family reunification, were accompanied to the German Embassy for an interview.

On May 25th one person, who is also in the procedure of family reunification, was accompanied by MYLA and Red Cross to the Sector for Foreigners and finalized the procedure for issuing a passport for foreigners and acquiring a visa at the German Embassy.

JUNE

TC Tabanovce

The official number of refugees staying in TC Tabanovce in June was **29**. During June there were no particularly new developments in the Transit Center in Tabanovce. The NGOs that monitor the hotspots for irregular border crossing, unofficially informed MYLA that the total number of refugees situated in the villages of Lojane and Vaksince is approximately **157**, who have been either pushed back from Serbia or have crossed the border from Greece to Macedonia. However there is a change in that most of the persons were push back from Serbia rather than coming from the southern border with Greece.

The official number of refugees staying in TC Tabanovce in June was 29.

As in the previous months, the institution did not change their practice of not allowing new refugees and migrants in the Transit Center. The only exceptions are made when it comes to vulnerable groups of individuals, who are allowed entrance for the time necessary to get assistance. The number of refugees staying outside the transit center or in the villages near it during June was approximately 60 people in total.

MYLA's field lawyers talked to any new arriving refugees and migrants in the transit center and informed a total of **12** persons about the asylum procedure in Macedonia. Also the field lawyer talked to all **3** unaccompanied minors who were still residing in Tabanovce during June, and answered some questions they had about their guardians and rights during an asylum procedure in Macedonia.

TC Vinojug

During June the number of persons accommodated in TC Vinojug varied between 9 and 14 persons. In the TC Vinojug are still accommodated one single man from Syria and one family from Iraq, who have applied for family reunification and their procedures are still ongoing.

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On 1st of June, one family from Iraq was accommodated in TC Vinojug and due to worsened medical health of some of the family members. Over the course of the month, on several occasions, they were taken to the hospital. MYLA's field lawyers gave them the necessary information about the asylum procedure but they were not interested in seeking asylum in Macedonia.

On June 19th, one unaccompanied minor from Libya was settled in TC Vinojug. In his attempt to escape from the police he injured his leg and surrendered to the police. He was taken to the hospital in Gevgelija by the border police and after receiving medical treatment he was brought and accommodated in TC Vinojug. MYLA's field lawyers together with the social workers from MLSP did an interview for assessment of the best interest of the child.

As the numbers show, during June, the situation in TC Vinojug did not change drastically. The field lawyers offered legal assistance to 60 persons who were all caught in an attempt to cross the border from Greece in Macedonia irregularly. After being profiled all of them are subsequently deported to Greece on unofficial border crossing points.

JULY

TC Tabanovce

In TC Tabanovce this month there was new development, but no changes in the practices of the institutions. The push backs continued this month as well and the people in concern were mostly single men and families. However the number of refugees seen in the villages near the Transit Center Tabanovce continued to decrease in comparison to the previous two months and in July only 80 persons were spotted by the NGOs that monitor the hotspots for irregular border crossings.

In July only 80 persons were spotted by NGOs that monitor the hotspots for irregular border crossings.

Similar to this, the number of persons staying in the surroundings of the train station in Tabanovce has decreased as well and this month approximately 90 persons could be seen in the vicinities.

As usual, the institutions did not change their practices and none of them were allowed to enter the transit center.

In July there was a problem with the official number of persons accommodated in the transit center. The number of unregistered refugees present in the transit center was higher than the official number given by the institutions. Also, the number of delivered meals was three times bigger than the registered refugees staying in the transit center. During the course of the month the number of persons constantly varied from day to day.

The majority of them are coming from Algeria, Pakistan, Iran, Libya and almost all of them are males. Even though no new persons were officially allowed in the transit center, in July, there was an increased presence of families in TC Tabanovce.

They are allowed to enter due to their vulnerable situation because there are always very small or sick children in the group.

However they only use the transit center as a resting point, where they stay for several days and continue their trip afterwards.

Of those staying in the transit center, 2 refugees are still in a procedure for voluntary return to their country of origin. Additionally, in July, 3 refugees applied for asylum in Macedonia. This is a family from Iran and after applying for asylum, they were transferred to the Reception center for asylum seekers in Vizbegovo in accordance with the provisions of the Law for Asylum and Temporary Protection.

There was one more person who wanted to apply for asylum in Macedonia, but was taken back to Greece, by the police. The night, between the 15th and 16th of July there was a police action in the transit center, when more than 15 persons were deported to Greece. The police action took place early in the morning when none of the organizations working in the transit center were present. Despite seeking explanation and motivation as to why this happened, MYLA did not receive any formal answer by the institutions.

During July, MYLA's field lawyer, informed 25 refugees were about the asylum procedure.

During the last week of the July total number of registered refugees was 24. From them 2 are unaccompanied minors. The majority of them comes from Iraq 8, then 4 are from Libya, 6 from Pakistan, 6 from Algeria, 3 from Iran and 1 from Afghanistan. The number of unregistered refugees was 29. All of them were males, 17 were from Algeria, 10 from Libya, 1 from Tunis, one from Morocco. There were 12 unaccompanied minors among them.

TC Vinojug

During July the situation in TC Vinojug did not change drastically. The number of persons accommodated in TC Vinojug varied between 12 and 16 persons. A total of 5 new arrivals were registered in the Transit Center in July.

On 10th of July one man from Pakistan was accom-

modated in TC Vinojug because he claimed that smugglers had kidnaped his family in Macedonia, however after a few days he changed his story and voluntarily left for Greece. On 26th of July one woman with her two children accompanied with one man, all from Syria were accommodated in TC Vinojug. The reason for their accommodation was the exhaustion from their journey.

The number of persons accommodated in TC Vinojug varied between 12 and 16 persons.

On 6th of July the unaccompanied minor from Libya, who was accommodated in TC Vinojug during June, was accompanied by MYLA's field lawyer and his guardian to the police station in Gevgelija where he applied for asylum. After that, the minor was transferred to the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo.

On 17th of July, one of the persons accommodated in the transit center and in the procedure for family reunification was successfully transferred to Germany where he was united with his family.

On 21st of July, the family from Iraq who had previously applied for family reunification received an information that they have a positive decision from the German embassy about their visa request.

The majority of the people that were offered legal assistance in TC Vinojug were persons that were apprehended in an attempt to enter Macedonia irregularly. In total 38 persons were deported to Greece during July. It's noticeable that all of the refugees tried to cross the border with smugglers. MYLA's field lawyers informed them about the asylum procedure and their rights as asylum seekers in the country but none of them expressed interest to apply for asylum. After being processed by the border police they were all deported to Greece.

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) is an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental professional organization which provides legal aid and strategically litigates to protect human rights. By using the knowledge and innovative capacities of young lawyers, MYLA promotes the rule of law and influences policy through research and advocacy. MYLA strives for a society in which the rule of law is established and people proactively strive for the respect of their human rights.

MYLA is the only organization in the Republic of Macedonia that provides free legal aid and represents asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern in procedures related to asylum, legal residence and other social rights.

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