

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association



# FIELD REPORT 2016

September



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*During the month of September there was an increase in the number of migrants entering from Greece in Macedonia and of those who are returned/pushed back from Serbia to Macedonia. Since the closure of the transit route smuggling has become the only method used to transit through Macedonia. The biggest challenge this month was to identify newly arrived refugees from those being pushed back from Serbia.*

Like the previous months, MYLA did not encounter refugees on field who applied for asylum in Macedonia. However, this is not for lack of trying, since those who maybe considered applying for asylum, were unwilling once they found out they have to go to the police themselves. The authorities in Macedonia continue to allow claims only on selective basis.

## TC Vinojug

The situation in TC Vinojug in September continued to be relatively similar to the previous months. The number of persons accommodated in TC Vinojug in September varied between 126 and 134 persons and compared to the previous months there has not been a significant progress regarding the access to the asylum procedure. This month the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy brought a new container designed to accommodate vulnerable groups.

*The asylum seekers that are accommodated in the center were not transferred to the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo and their freedom of movement is restricted like all of the other refugees staying in the camp.*

The majority of persons who were offered legal aid and counseling were persons caught by Macedonian police in an attempt to enter Macedonia irregularly. The total number of refugees who were deported after being caught on Macedonian territory in September was **117** persons, most of them being from Syria and Afghanistan, and in smaller numbers persons from Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and Libya. All of the push backs are carried out unofficially to places/points where there are no Greek police patrols.

MYLA's field lawyers gave them the necessary information, mostly on questions regarding the asylum procedure in Macedonia, social security in Macedonia, possibilities for finding jobs, information regarding the accommodation conditions in

the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo, the integration process in Macedonia, and other information.

On September 8th 2016, one person left TC Vinojug voluntarily. He explained that the reason for his leaving is reunification with his family in Turkey. On September 10th 2016, one family from Afghanistan that had been intercepted by the Macedonian police in an attempt to enter in Macedonia irregularly was accommodated in the center due to medical emergency. After two weeks, they left TC Vinojug upon their request. On September 29th 2016, one family from Afghanistan that was interested to apply for asylum, was accompanied by one of MYLA's field lawyers to the Police station in Gevgelija to file an asylum application.



Women talking to counselors about their concerns  
Source: MYLA

## MYLA FIELD STAFF

- 12 Field Lawyers
- 8 Interpreters
- 7 On-call Attorneys
- 24/7 Free Legal Aid Number



## TC Tabanovce

The situation in TC Tabanovce in September remained relatively the same as in the previous few months. The number of refugees transiting in the area has been increasing on a daily basis, especially during the nights. Generally, the changes depend of the push backs made by the Serbian police. The refugees that were noticed passing through the center were mostly from Algeria and Morocco and almost all of them were men. The police this month was really strict and did not allow them enter the camp for more than several hours.



MYLA field lawyer in conversation with colleagues and refugees  
Source: MYLA

On September 1st 2016, police authorities undertook an initiative to register and take pictures of all refugees accommodated in TC Tabanovce. MYLA did not receive any formal notice as to the motives behind this registration. Based on the statements of some of the refugees, the authorities told them that each of them will be given registration documents that will help them when they continue their journey. This information has not been confirmed by the authorities, since they are refusing to give any statement about the registration activities.

*A new more restrictive practice has been introduced and new arrivals are not allowed to enter in the camp at all.*

The number of refugees in the transit center in Tabanovce has remained the same as reported in the previous report, i.e. 67 persons, from which 54 are from Syria; 7 from Iraq and 7 from Palestine. During the month of September **85** newcomers mostly from Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq have arrived in the transit center in Tabanovce. They are given food and water from the other refugees staying in the camp as well as clothes. In emergency cases, if medical assistance is needed, they will be allowed to enter inside the camp but only to get the necessary help. After receiving the service, they are taken outside the camp area.

The majority of newcomers and refugees that were pushed back from Serbia can be seen in the surrounding areas out

side the camp. The camp is constantly being monitored by the police authorities and each time newcomers are detected, they are expelled from the camp. The field team has managed to speak some **63** refugees in September and explain the asylum procedure in Macedonia but none of them were interested to stay or apply for asylum in Macedonia.

Among the newcomers **2** were unaccompanied minors. The representatives from the Ministry for labor and social policy

*During September there has been an increased presence patrolling the neighboring villages and the border zone with Serbia in September.*

were informed about this situation. They pointed out that as long as they are not in the camp they will not follow procedure i.e. they are not the states responsibility. Because the police did not allow them to enter in the camp they slept near to the railway station waiting for the day when they will be able to cross the border to Serbia.

The police and military forces have had an increased presence patrolling the neighboring villages and the border zone with Serbia in September. The intention of their increased presence was to prevent smugglers and irregular crossing of the border with Serbia. Nevertheless, this measure has not decreased nor has it prevented prevent the smugglers and irregular crossings of the border with Serbia as there is a increase of the smuggling activities, migration transition and push backs.



TC Tabanovce in September 2016  
Source: MYLA

The activities for the persons accommodated in the camps continued this month as well. A total of **16** creative workshop were organized for women and girls in TC Tabanovce and TC Vinojug. In addition to these activities there have been Pilates classes organized upon the request of the women accommodated in the centers as well as individual and group counseling with women and girls about their concerns.

*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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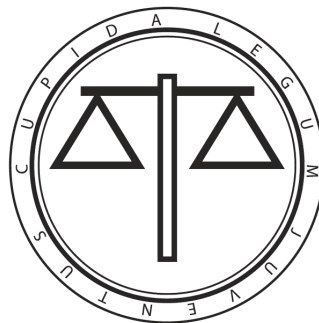
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Kingdom of the Netherlands

