



## BVMN Statement on Czech Officers' Involvement in Fundamental Rights Violations

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*November 18th, 2022*

Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) has requested the initiation of an investigation into potential human rights violations perpetrated by Czech officers deployed in Hungary and in North Macedonia. BVMN recorded instances of pushbacks and violence that could amount to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment in violation of Article 4 EU Charter and Article 3 ECHR. Czechia currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union while not being compliant with European Union Law including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Since 2020, BVMN has recorded accounts from people on the move who have been intercepted and apprehended in Hungary and North Macedonia and pushed back to Serbia and Greece respectively, without due process. People on the move have reported that Czech officers perpetrated violence against them that would amount to inhuman and degrading treatment or torture. Also, Czech officers have potentially assisted in human rights violations by apprehending people on the move and handing them over to national authorities with knowledge that people would be pushed back, or witnessed as violence was perpetrated against people, behaviour that might amount to aiding and abetting torture or inhuman and degrading treatment.

On November 3rd, BVMN sent a notification and requested the initiation of an investigation to the Czech General Inspectorate of Security Forces (GISF). Their mandate stipulates that any person can notify the GISF of “an act that fulfils the characteristics of a criminal act, misdemeanour or disciplinary offence” perpetrated by a law enforcement officer. The Government Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council for Human Rights were equally notified.

BVMN recorded 16 testimonies that mention the presence of Czech officers. These officers were identified by their uniform which reportedly read ‘POLICIE’ and included the Czech flag on the shoulders. According to these testimonies, Czech officers seem to be mainly present in operations at the Hungarian border with Serbia and at the North Macedonian border with Greece.

At Hungarian borders, respondents reported that officers hit them using their flashlights, used electric discharge weapons (also known as tasers) and pepper-sprayed them. Respondents also state that they were kicked in the ribs and hit after they were commanded to kneel. One respondent stated that the Czech officer said ““They told me if they catch me again they’re gonna break my legs. They said, “I’ll remember you”. (See testimony no. 2).



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Another respondent stated that after being told to lie on the ground, a Czech and a Hungarian officer proceeded to repeatedly kick him in the ribs which resulted in a hematoma and possible fracture of the ribs, and to hit him over the head with the flashlight which resulted in a 5 cm wound. (See testimony no. 4).

In North Macedonia, respondents reported how Czech officers apprehended the respondents in a train to Gevgelija, located in the South near the Greek border, bringing them either to a camp or police station. In addition, in the majority of the encounters with Czech officers, respondents mentioned these officers being extremely violent with them. The officers reportedly used their batons or flashlights to beat respondents, kicked them, used bare fists to hit respondents, used verbal violence, and took or destroyed their personal belongings. One respondent recounts the officers saying :“We are from Czech. We hate immigrants. So, if you come again, we are going to beat you. Stop coming here.” (See testimony no.12) Respondents recount having their hands tied behind their backs while being kicked and one respondent was attacked by a police dog. (See testimony no. 9).

At least two testimonies report that foreign officers or speaking a foreign language were taking photos and videos of people on the move as violence was perpetrated against them, or that they were watching silently as the other officers were beating and pepper-spraying people in their custody. (See testimony no. 8 and no. 10).

Across all 16 testimonies collected by the BVMN, 15 of them (94%) refer to respondents being beaten, 10 refer to respondents being kicked (62.5%) which exemplifies the systematic use of excessive force to apprehend and pushback people on the move. Moreover, in 4 testimonies (25%) the belongings of people on the move were destroyed and in another 7 (44%) they were subsequently destroyed. This data is visualised in the attached tables.

In addition, we attached to the complaint an open-source visual investigation. The investigation was possible with the evidence brought forward by a survivor of a pushback from North Macedonia to Greece. The person captured the photograph of a Czech officer in Vinograd Temporary Transit Center, from where he was pushed back to Greece.

According to governmental reports, Czech police officers have been responsible for the apprehension of 28,647 people on the move in North Macedonia, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovenia from 2017 to 2020. Reports from 2020 documented the apprehension of 8,306 people on the move on the North Macedonian-Greek border by Czech police<sup>1</sup>. The Minister of Foreign Affairs in North Macedonia, Oliver Spasovski, stated in September 2021 that, “the project to intensify control and surveillance of the southern part of our state border

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<sup>1</sup> Czechia.. Aliens branch (Policie České republiky). (2020). “Record for 2020” [Bilance roku 2020 z pohledu cizinecké policie], p. 12. Available at: <https://www.policie.cz/clanek/bilance-roku-2020-z-pohledu-cizinecke-policie.aspx>



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currently employs 131 foreign police officers, including 40 Czech police officers<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, in September 2021, 50 Czech officers were deployed to Hungary to the border with Serbia<sup>3</sup>.

We remain available for further inquiries or any follow-up on this matter.

Contact: [advocacy@borderviolence.eu](mailto:advocacy@borderviolence.eu)

### Testimonies referencing Czech officers:

1. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/october-9-2022-0200-near-horgos-serbia-not-far-from-a1-highway/>
2. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/august-24-2022-1400-horgos-serbia/>
3. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/july-1-2022-0500-horgos-serbia/>
4. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/june-20-2022-0400-horgos-serbia/>
5. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/october-27-2021-2300-asotthalmi-lap-ret-hungary/>
6. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/february-14-2018-0000-close-to-kisszallas-hungary/>
7. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/september-4-2020-1300-gevgelija-north-macedonia/>
8. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/august-3-2020-1200-prdejtsi-north-macedonia/>
9. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/august-16-2020-0100-kisava-north-macedonia/>
10. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/august-17-2020-1330-gevgelija-north-macedonia/>

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs North Macedonia. (2021, 13 September). "Press Release: Meeting off the leaderships of our and the Czech Ministry of Internal Affairs: The excellent cooperation continues" (Средба на раководствата на нашето и чешкото МВР: Продолжува одличната соработка). Available at: <https://mvr.gov.mk/vest/17109>

<sup>3</sup> Euractiv. Aneta Zachová. (2021, 28 September). "Czechia will send 50 police officers to guard the Hungary-Serbia border". Available at: [https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/czechia-will-send-50-police-officers-to-guard-the-hungary-serbia-border/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/czechia-will-send-50-police-officers-to-guard-the-hungary-serbia-border/)



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11. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/august-20-2020-1000-15-minutes-driving-the-north-macedonian-greek-border-near-gevgelija/>
12. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/january-27-2020-1845-gevgelija-north-macedonia/>
13. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/january-11-2020-0000-bogdanci-mnk/>
14. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/january-10-2020-0020-bogorodica-north-macedonia/>
15. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/may-28-2021-0000-near-idomeni-greece/>
16. <https://www.borderviolence.eu/violence-reports/march-25-2022-0000-41-128306-22-517528/>