



TRAPPED IN EUROPE'S QUAGMIRE: The Situation of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Bulgaria

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INTRODUCTION

On April 28 2014, a random visitor to the State Agency for Refugees Registration and Reception Center in Harmanli would have stumbled upon a list of 21 regulations written in Arabic and Bulgarian (see the full list in Appendix 1). Pinned on the wall close to the administration office, some of the regulations in this list read:

11. During visiting delegations, you have to smile and speak quietly, no yelling and shouting.

17. You have to be patient in receiving status. The impatient ones may not receive status if they break relations with the administration.

18. Those who do not wear badges will not be serviced by the administration and will receive status at a later point.

The rules above were not a widespread regulation, but an initiative of the camp's management, and were quickly removed after complaints by NGO workers. However, these exemplify how the Bulgarian state perceives and defines the people in need of protection. Hardly as dignified people worthy of respect, rather as people to be silenced through intimidation and endowed with rights contingent on administrative whims. Under the surface of international conventions and Bulgaria's renewed commitments in regard to protection seekers, there is long perpetuated disarray. Such rules are not merely symbolic; they do have real consequences on the lives of those who enter Bulgaria seeking protection. These demonstrate an intention of managing asylum seekers through the logic of discipline and punishment. The lives of asylum-seekers and refugees in Bulgaria are entangled in a circle of violence, insecurity, and arbitrariness.

In an interview for *Monitor* newspaper, Mr. Chirpanliev, head of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR), commented¹:

As of now, we make refugees who do not want to study Bulgarian language sign declarations that they refuse to do so. In such cases, the state is not going to spend money on their integration and most probably acts of repatriation will follow. It also became clear that a portion of the Kurds come from areas without military actions. They can be easily returned back there (Chirpanliev, 2014).

Chirpanliev's statement follows the same logic at work in Harmanli's ad-hoc regulations. Bulgaria punishes asylum-seekers for its own incapability to provide adequate programs for social inclusion. It is alarming that such punishments often involve threats of repatriation and blunt refusal of status. The approach of the Bulgarian authorities to "discipline" is not new. This is an ongoing practice of imposing fear and anxiety that we have traced in our research since 2011.

With this report, Border Monitoring Bulgaria (BMB) highlights the controversial approach of the Bulgarian state in relation to asylum seekers and refugees. While the Bulgarian authorities strive to conform to EU norms for asylum seekers and refugees and to securitize the external border of the

¹ *Monitor* newspaper. 2014. <http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=430151> Accessed June 8, 2014.

EU, it often does so by resorting to techniques of violence, fear, and intimidation. These are accompanied by structural economic and social conditions of poverty, unemployment, widespread extreme right hatred, and everyday racist practices of the majority. Even though some small improvements have been achieved, mostly because of close cooperation with volunteers and NGOs in the last months, nonetheless, based on our most recent research, we argue that – at present – the conditions for asylum seekers and protection status holders in Bulgaria are not satisfactory in providing a dignified life. At this point, BMB recommends against the conduct of Dublin returns to Bulgaria and for a reconsideration of the Dublin Regulation in general. By placing an unbearable burden on Bulgaria as a first country of entry, in a context of socio-economic crisis and austerity, the Dublin regulation only contributes towards the instable and chaotic situation of refugees in Bulgaria.

Background Information

Bulgaria is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and of its 1967 Protocol. As such, it provides four types of protection: refuge (provided by the President's Office), refugee status (provided by the State Agency for Refugees), humanitarian status (elsewhere known as subsidiary protection, provided by the SAR), and temporary protection (by the President of the Republic). The Law of Asylum and Refugees regulates the conditions for providing protection to foreigners, including their rights and obligations.

Since 2013, the war in Syria and the subsequent refugee crisis resulted in an unprecedented influx of asylum seekers to Bulgaria. In 2013, 7,144 people applied for asylum. During the first four months of 2014, 2,351 applications were received. In 2012, 1,387 people applied for asylum. Thus, in 2013 the number of applications for asylum roughly quintupled relative to the previous year. In the previous ten-year period between 2003-2012, the average number of asylum applications was around 1,000. This means a seven-fold increase in 2013 compared to the average of the previous decade.

In 2013, 183 refugee statuses and 2,279 humanitarian statuses were granted. For the first four months of 2014, Bulgaria granted 2,154 refugee statuses and 1,488 humanitarian statuses. In 2012, Bulgaria granted 18 refugee statuses and 159 humanitarian statuses. In comparison, for the previous ten-year period of 2003-2012 the average number of refugee statuses granted per year was 18, and of humanitarian statuses – 210. This means that in the first four months of 2014 the number of granted refugee statuses was 120 times higher than the average of the previous ten-year period. In 2013, there was a ten-fold increase of humanitarian statuses granted as compared to the average numbers for the previous ten-year period. The top five countries of origin listed in applications for asylum, in the period between 01.01.1993 and 30.04.2014, are as follows: Syria (6791), Afghanistan (6462), Iraq (5698), Armenia (1897), and stateless (1776).

SAR manages the so-called Registration and Reception Centers on the territory of Bulgaria. There are three Registration and Reception Centers in Sofia (four camps altogether: Ovcha Kupel, Kovachevtsi, Vrajdebna, Voenna Rampa), Banya and Harmanli. In addition, there is a Transit Center in Pastrogor. The integration center of SAR is located in Sofia, in the facilities of the Ovcha Kupel camp. There are two Special Homes for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners in Busmantsi and Lyubimets, which are supposed to serve the function of holding people who await deportation.

Bulgaria was underprepared for this exponential increase in asylum requests and could hardly grant substantive protection status – in institutional, financial, or material terms. As an external border of the European Union, Bulgaria faces the double role of a gatekeeper and a first country of entry in accord with the Dublin regulation. This situation poses serious challenges for the country both in terms of the securitization of its borders, and in terms of the reception, registration, and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. During the first few months after August 2013 it became obvious just how unprepared a country like Bulgaria is in dealing with a larger number of asylum seekers. For months on end the accommodation conditions were under the living standards, the registration of asylum applications was painstakingly slow; the employees working on the status granting procedure were way below the required number. International organizations like UNHCR and Human Rights Watch strongly condemned the existing conditions and advised against Dublin deportations back to Bulgaria. In the meantime Bulgaria has received 11,062,004 BGN (approx. 5,6 million EUR) from the EU Emergency Aid Reserve to ease the situation, and has invested an additional 2,726,385 BGN (1,4 million EUR) from the state budget. Those funds went for improving the material conditions in the camps and for increasing the capacity of SAR. The present report monitors the ongoing developments, the effects of the changing living conditions, and the remaining problems that asylum seekers and refugees face in Bulgaria.

Methodology

The research for this report combined interviewing and public discourse analysis in terms of both data collection and analysis. We have conducted interviews with asylum seekers and status holders in and outside SAR camps, doubled by interviews with public officials, NGO representatives, lawyers, and volunteers. The interviews were of a semi-structured type. Some interviews were individual, while others were conducted in groups of two to three people. Moreover, we have gathered and analyzed the relevant state policies and pieces of legislation and analyzed parts of the public discourse concerning asylum-seekers and refugees. The main body of research has been conducted during the period March-June 2014 in Bulgaria. In addition, interviews with asylum-seekers were conducted in Edirne, Turkey in end of April and beginning of May 2014. BMB researchers visited the SAR centers in Harmanli and in Pastrogor in March 2014, the centers in Voenna Rampa and Vrazhdebna in Sofia in April and May 2014.

During the March-June 2014 period BMB representatives conducted a total of 134 interviews with asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, we have further interviewed 10 NGO representatives, and 3 lawyers working with asylum seekers and refugees. We have spoken to 5 institutional representatives of SAR and the security forces in the SAR centers in Pastrogor and Harmanli. The total number of stakeholders interviewed thus far is 17. Unfortunately, our further requests for interviews with representatives of SAR in Sofia were rejected after the media publication of a report regarding a push-back from 21 April 2014. We will continue with our attempts to gain access to SAR officials as to be able to present their point of view and the information they are willing to share with us.

The research was conducted under the auspices of Border Monitoring project. The investigation in Bulgaria was undertaken by four independent researchers who have been following the situation of refugees in the country since 2011. In addition to the recorded data, the team has participated in numerous discussions and observations over the last years. Since 2011, members of

the team have conducted extensive field research in Pastrogor and the area in 2011 and 2012, in Sofia in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 and in Banya in 2013. The report uses this acquired knowledge and experience in making informed conclusions regarding the continuities of certain practices however the main conclusions are based on the most recent research and a context analysis of 2014.

Following strict ethical codes, the researchers have retained full anonymity of the informers, except in those cases where the information was already public (e.g. in media reports, press conferences, reports from other organizations) or respondents have agreed to state their identities. The entire range of audio recordings and written notes is in the possession of the researchers and will not be released under any circumstances. It was made explicit to the interviewees that BMB does not represent any legal aid organization or state institution and cannot influence the outcome of their asylum application or their current living circumstances so to make it clear that there will be no immediate benefit for the respondents from sharing their accounts with the researchers. The stories were checked for consistency and in cases of extraordinary events – e.g. push-backs, delayed procedure, violence, or problems with documents, the respondents were asked to provide as many details as possible and they were asked several times to elaborate on the events by answering different questions. The recounts that were deemed incredible or biased were omitted in the report. We have aimed at relying on the most neutrally-sounding recounts.

The report aims at identifying tendencies and structural patterns that still require close consideration on the part of Bulgarian authorities and international institutions. We have attempted to pinpoint persistent and recurring problems and developments. The institutional regulations and the general conditions in the country are in flux. The numerous changes taking place lead to both improvements as well as to the perpetuation of confusion and chaos. Instead of a snapshot of the current situation, this report aims to trace recurring trends, which have long-term effect on the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria.

The main findings of the report, described in detail in each section, are:

- The continuing push-backs and the increased presence of border guards at the Bulgarian-Turkish border, driving away asylum-seekers by means of fear from crossing, are an indication that Bulgaria is not giving the full opportunity to third-country-nationals to seek asylum and receive protection. This represents a serious violation of human rights. In light of recent reports regarding third country nationals trying to reach Bulgaria through sea, and in conjunction with Bulgarian Border Police conduct of push-backs and violence, BMB is seriously concerned about what might happen if routes are to switch to seaways.
- Despite some improvements in the material conditions in the camps, there are many new problems for refugees stemming from the speeding-up of the procedure to grant legal status and the increased number of granted legal statuses (only to Syrian citizens). The lack of coherent institutional frameworks for integration, together with the general economic conditions in Bulgaria, most often leave the holders of refugee and subsidiary statuses under the aegis of homelessness, unemployment, poverty, and social isolation.
- The integration of recently recognized refugees and humanitarian status holders is impeded by a currently non-operational state integration program. With the previous National Integration Program having finished in 2013 and a new one still in the making and far away from being implemented, the ever growing number of protection status holders is left in a void without consistent and efficient state support for their future integration into the Bulgarian society. Initial financial and social support, language skills acquisition, and support for access to the

labor market is non-existent. The lack of an integration program contributes to the vulnerable position of recent status holders and increases the risks of extreme poverty, unemployment, homelessness, xenophobic and racist attitudes and discrimination. We insist that until a new well designed and efficiently implemented Integration Program is adopted, beneficiaries of international protection have very limited chances of social inclusion, and even of physical survival on the territory of Bulgaria.

- There is a growing number of xenophobic crimes and a lack of adequate institutional response to them. There is an alarming increase in the number of far-right formations, coupled with a dominance of xenophobic discourses in the public sphere. Representatives of state institutions are regularly including racist comments and implications in their official statements without being sanctioned.
- There has been a worrying change in the EU practices on intra-EU mobility of holders of subsidiary status that led to significant restrictions on their possibilities for traveling outside of the country. Multiple member-states recently started to apply their visa requirements and limiting the access to visa application procedures, a practice that in the past was not as strict. These recent changes deepen the tendency for segregation of refugees in the periphery of the Union, sealed with the Dublin Regulation.

Map of the report

The report consists of six main sections and a conclusion with recommendations: **I. Push-backs and violence at the border, II. From overcrowded camps to production of homelessness, III. Integration in flux, IV. Xenophobia and racists assaults: institutions, far-right, street violence, V. Asylum procedures: the legal experts' opinion, VI. Europe's most unwanted: restrictions on free movement, VII. Recommendations.** Each section presents detailed information on the issues of concern. At the end of each section, the reader can find BMB's brief summaries and conclusions. The concluding section of the report contains our recommendations in regard to the main points discussed in the report.

I. PUSH-BACKS AND VIOLENCE AT THE BULGARIAN BORDER

“You have to go back; we don’t want you in Bulgaria.”²

“We actually heard that the Bulgarian police are ruder than the Greek police. When they catch you the Bulgarians will try to make you feel bad so that you don’t try to come to them anymore... They will make you hate yourself...In the last two months escaping [through Bulgaria] became really dangerous. After we heard about the stories of hitting, swearing, shouting, things like that, it started being very scary. We will not cross through Bulgaria.”³

1. Institutional response to the “refugee influx”

In November 2013, the Bulgarian government introduced the *“[Plan for containing the crisis arisen as a result of enhanced migratory pressure towards the territory of Bulgaria](#)”⁴* which resulted in a prevention of access to Bulgarian territory, hence a prevention of access to asylum procedures in violation of international refugee law⁵.

In order to achieve the stated goals, the Republic of Bulgaria is in the process of erecting an approximately 30-km-long fence alongside the “most sensitive sections” of its border with Turkey. In November, Bulgaria deployed 1500 additional police⁶ patrols in order to attain “100% physical security” of the most sensitive border sections. BMB cautions that due to the panic on the part of the Bulgarian authorities caused by the increased number of people seeking protection, the government has resorted to violence, both physical and psychological, as well as to push-backs in order to keep the number of asylum-seekers low. The reported abuses take place despite border police trainings in human rights under the project *“[Training in the basic rights of humans](#)”⁷* implemented by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) jointly with FRONTEX.

International organizations have continuously issued concerns over the measures Bulgaria takes to restrict access to its territory along the border with Turkey⁸. These have already resulted in

² A statement by border guard uttered to a Syrian citizen caught at the Turkish-Bulgarian border.

³ Interview conducted in Edirne, Turkey, on May 2, 2014.

⁴ Specifically section 1, paragraph 1) *Limiting the number of illegal immigrants entering the Republic of Bulgaria* and section 4) *Decreasing the number of persons who have sought after protection on the territory of the country*.

⁵ Bulgaria is bound to the principle of non-refoulement through its ratification of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Bulgarian domestic Law on Asylum and Refugees further binds Bulgaria to the principle as it transfers European asylum directives.

⁶ According to UNHCR approximately 160 of them have been removed from the border. UNHCR. 2014. <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/en/news/2014/bulgaria-unhcr-says-asylum-conditions-improved-warns-against-transfer-of-vulnerable-people.html> Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁷ MoI. 2011. http://www.academy.mvr.bg/International_activity/Partnership/osnovni_prava.htm Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁸ The most extensive report focusing on cases of push-backs being the Human Rights Watch report from April 2014. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/04/30/containment-plan-0> Accessed June 7, 2014.

significant reductions of asylum seekers' arrivals into Bulgaria. In reports from January⁹, February¹⁰ and April¹¹ 2014, UNHCR remains concerned that “*measures to control irregular entry to Bulgaria prevent people in need of international protection from entering and requesting asylum in Bulgaria*”. UNHCR warns of reports of individuals in need of international protections being prevented from entering Bulgarian territory forcibly, which have led to cases of family separations. Human Rights Watch (HRW) also reports multiple cases of push-backs in November and December 2013 (footnote 8).

2. Testimonies of push-backs

Refugees currently residing in Bulgaria complain about witnessed and/or experienced push-backs at the border with Turkey. The push-backs are often reported to be accompanied by physical violence and/or psychological abuse inflicted to asylum-seekers by Border Police officers.

In the months after September 2013, it surfaced in media outlets that push-backs to Turkey were taking place. One such media account was given by a Syrian citizen. [According to him](#)¹² on December 6 2013, he was beaten by border police in the region of the river Kalamitsa and forcefully returned to Turkey. That same month journalists from the Bulgarian National Television went to the green zone with a hidden camera and from their [report](#)¹³ it became clear that, “We [the border guards] are not given clear instructions on how to proceed when we see refugees. We are just told to beat them and return them to Turkey.”

Some of the attempted push-backs are not successful. For example, in October 2013¹⁴, a group of 12 people – six Syrian young men and a family of two adults and four children were stopped by Bulgarian border police while attempting to cross the border with Turkey. The police officers initially tried to scare off the young men by physically assaulting them and by shooting in the air. The techniques of border police did not work however, and the group was let in Bulgaria to seek asylum. The group was kept in the open for three to four hours.

Even though the Border Police headquarter renounced such statements, interviews conducted by BMB, coupled with the report issued by HRW, confirm the regular occurrence of push-backs. HRW has reported 44 cases of push-backs involving at least 519 people. BMB has further identified 14 cases of push-backs, involving at least 50 people.¹⁵

Push-backs of vulnerable people

In interviews conducted by BMB on March 27 and 28, 2014 in the center of Harmanli, two of the reported cases of push-backs involved vulnerable persons, namely pregnant women. One of them lost her baby later on in Turkey because of the endured trauma. According to the woman,

⁹ UNHCR. 2014. <http://www.unhcr.org/52c691d59.html> Accessed June 7, 2014.

¹⁰ UNHCR. 2014. <http://www.refworld.org/publisher,UNHCR,,BGR,530aff1d4,0.html> Accessed June 7, 2014.

¹¹ UNHCR. 2014. <http://www.refworld.org/publisher,UNHCR,,BGR,534cd85b4,0.html> Accessed June 7, 2014

¹² Capital.2013. http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/obshtestvo/2014/01/31/2231657_stena_ot_jumruci/ Accessed June 7, 2014.

¹³ BNT.2013.<http://bnt.bg/news/politsiya/ekskluzivno-po-bnt-ohranata-na-ba-lgarskata-granitsa-s-turtsiya> Accessed June 7, 2014.

¹⁴ Interview conducted with the father of the family on June 2, 2014. We do not count this as a push-back.

¹⁵ These numbers do not include the cases reported in media outlets and cases where people have approached the border but have run back because they have been scared to cross due to police presence.

when she and her husband were caught by border police they asked for protection in Bulgaria to which the border police responded with club beating of his feet and back. Reportedly, border police held “guns in our faces.” The family was able to enter Bulgaria the second time around.

The other case involves a pregnant woman who attempted to enter Bulgaria through Turkey three times. The first two times she and her husband were caught by border police, which made them sit on the ground, “guarding us with arms until the Turkish police came and took us back.” Both cases involved Syrian citizens and took place in November 2013¹⁶.

BMB has identified cases of multiple attempts of crossing. In one of the cases, a Syrian man tried to cross the border 6 times. The testimony of yet another asylum-seeker points to an even higher number of attempts, namely 10.

Violence exercised by Border police in recent cases of push-backs

Push-backs at the Bulgarian border have not stopped. BMB recorded instances of push-backs that have taken place in March, April and May 2014. On April 21 2014, BMB received the news of yet [another push-back](#)¹⁷. The push-back took place on that same day and the victims were a Syrian mother with her four children (10, 17, 22, 24 years old). The Syrian family decided to seek protection in Bulgaria in order to reunite with two family members. The family was lost in the Bulgarian forest for two days, eventually reaching the town of Voden, where they were received by a local man.

Here is a description of the event:

After a phone call conducted by the local man, “Bulgarian border police came to take us. They told us ‘camp Sofia’ but instead brought us to the border,” reports the mother. According to her, two policemen brought them to the border, where they were awaited by 5 or 6 more policemen who were finally reinforced by 7 or 8 more policemen. As reported by the family, the beating was initiated on the Turkish side after the 10-year-old boy requested food. “No, no, go away, do not come back on the Bulgarian side,” they were told. One of the children started taking photos with his phone, which provoked the beating. “We were beaten by 14 policemen. One policeman stayed away from it [the beating]. He had a dark blue uniform and he always said ‘Calm down! Calm down!’ The rest did not listen and continued with the beating. From 14 policemen one was good...Some of the policemen had green uniforms, “one of them, we saw he had three stripes, green and white stripes,” some had camouflage uniforms. The mother further recalls that they were beaten with electric sticks: “The police brought the sticks from the car. Three of them. When you are touched by this stick, you feel like you cannot move your hand anymore. They only had three of them, the rest were normal sticks... One of the boys escaped towards the forest, and then he saw a military car and started shouting ‘Turkish police, Turkish police!’ and the Bulgarian police immediately went to the Bulgarian side as if nothing has happened. The Turkish police saw us on the ground. I [the mother] told the Turkish police that our phones have been taken away but the Bulgarian police said that this is not true because we have not even entered

¹⁶ Both interviews conducted during BMB’s visit to the camp in Harmanli.

¹⁷ Bordermonitoring. 2014. <http://bordermonitoring.eu/2014/04/child-beaten-at-eu-border-brutal-push-backs-continue-in-bulgaria/> Accessed June 7, 2014.

Bulgaria.” The mother continued, “We thought we were going to a safe place but it was like in Syria.”

BMB received the news that one of the brothers again attempted to cross the border in May. He was again pushed back.

On May 15, 2014, at around 11 p.m. local time, two Syrian brothers have been pushed back by Bulgarian border police, well into Bulgarian territory (approximately 7 km). The men, 38 and 25 years-old, have been approached by Border Police with a severe beating. One of the Syrians has been hit to the head numerous times, as well as to his legs. After the beating, the men were so scared that they “had to drag themselves back to Turkey.” One of the men has endured a serious psychological trauma: he refuses to go out and to eat. The family of the victims, currently residing in Germany, is in shock. They have already lost a son who tried to cross into Greece on a boat two months ago¹⁸.



Semi push-backs through fear and intimidation practices

During its visit to Edirne, Turkey, BMB recorded testimonies of the fear endured when attempting to cross into Bulgarian territory. In one of the reported cases from March 2014, a group of asylum seekers did not approach the border because they saw Bulgarian border guards well into the Turkish territory. The testimony follows¹⁹:

¹⁸ BMB has only spoken to family members in Germany and to a friend of the family who gave the signal. Both parties have been in constant communication with the victims after the push-back. The picture of the injury (together with google photo of the site, not in this report) was given to BMB by the person who reported about the push-back.

¹⁹ The testimony was given on May 2, 2014 in Edirne, Turkey, after the attempted crossing.

It was in the afternoon when we started towards the border. It was nine of us plus two children. We were in the bushes on the Turkish side, close to the green zone but right before the road where the jeeps go, still on the Turkish side. We sent one man to check for police and he came back whispering ‘Police! Police!’ We asked him what police and he said ‘Bulgarians, Bulgarians.’ We all saw them soon after, as we were 50m away from them. They had green uniforms. They saw us too. They did not do anything. Just stayed in the bushes. One of them started going away. We started running back to our car.

While the officials claim that all measures directed at border protection aim at channeling the asylum seekers to the official crossing points, BMB's observations suggest that asylum-seekers are denied entry at the checkpoints. According to the story of two Syrian men who attempted to seek asylum at Kapitan Andreevo and Malko Tarnovo, the officials at the border twice denied them entry and they only succeeded to cross the green border with the help of smugglers. The two men who have been living in Bulgaria until the early 2000s initially tried obtaining a visa and returning to the country as permanent citizens but were denied entry even after expressing their desire to seek asylum.

3. Humiliation practices at the border and in the border prisons²⁰

Multiple cases of extreme disregard of human dignity at the border and in border prisons have been reported to BMB for the period of November 2013 - April 2014. A common experience among protection-seekers is beatings, cursing, shouting, and kicking from the border police. Humiliating behavior also involves instances of stripping off clothes for supposed searches and leaving people naked for hours on: “Everybody goes through that. Even small babies!²¹”

The practice of humiliating searches was already evident back in 2012. A man from Iran reports:

We were arrested at the border and brought to an arrest cell. They searched us. In a very bad way. They searched our clothes while we were naked. And then they hit me with my clothes in my face. Then my friend. They searched his clothes and hit him with his clothes in his face. They asked him: ‘Why did not you pay? Why you did not pay the lawyer and the translator? You are going to spend more time here²².

Another man testifies:

Border Police searched me. I took my clothes off and they searched me while naked. They searched my [looks away]... my whole body they searched. They made me sit and stand, sit and stand. This is part of the searching procedure. I was not beaten at the

²⁰ ‘Border prison’ is commonly used name by asylum-seekers which refers to the facilities in Elhovo, Kapitan Andreevo and Malko Tarnovo.

²¹ Interview conducted in Harmanli on March 27, 2014.

²² Recorded interview 11. 18.08.2012.

*border police station but they yelled at me. I do not know what they were screaming. They were aggressive*²³.

A reported case in the center in Elhovo involves people being forced to stay out in the cold for approximately 16 hours (from 2 p.m. to 6 a.m.) without food and water²⁴. Another case in Elhovo reveals the extreme violence of police officers when two people escaped the facilities. Afterwards, five people were stripped naked and beaten on their backs. Two of them were reported to be Iranian citizens²⁵. Asylum-seekers reported being held in crowded rooms where children and adults (men and women) were kept together with no access to the bathroom during the night.

Cases of border police officials confiscating personal belongings, especially mobile phones, have also been reported. One of the interviewed men reports:

*I arrived in a village. The police kept me on the ground for 3 hours without water. Then I was sent to Elhovo. A guy from my group tried to make a phone call. The police took his phone and broke it and [was] shouting. They did not hit us... They did not take any money from us*²⁶.

Back in 2012, BMB spoke to a minor refugee from Afghanistan. He spent almost 3 months in Lyubimets. The interview took place outside the transit center in Pastrogor²⁷:

S: The Border Police caught me and brought me to a border prison. I was there for three days before they brought me to Lyubimets. Very bad prison. I had a lawyer from Svilengrad. The lawyer was with border police. They told me that if I do not pay a lawyer, I will go to prison for 5 years. This is the law in Bulgaria. I gave the money to a police officer. 500 euro. Police officer gave it to the lawyer. When I saw the lawyer he told me, 'Just say da, da, da to all of the questions,' and this is what I did. My friend, from Iran, he told me he paid 600 euro. But all people give money. It is not just me.

I: Do people pay different prices? Some more, some less?

S: Yes. And luggage. If you have good luggage... do you know luggage?

I: Yes, I know luggage.

S: If you have good luggage the police takes it. They took my luggage.

I: And when you were caught at the border how did they behave?

S: Not bad. Some police good, some police bad. Depends. Because two friends from Iran, when the border police caught them, the dog attacked them. Somebody was beaten.

Police violence and humiliating behavior by the authorities at the border is a recurring practice recorded by BMB since the summer of 2012. These are not single incidents, triggered by

²³ Recorded interview G12. 17.08.2012.

²⁴ Interview conducted in Harmanli on March 28, 2014. The case itself did not happen in 2014.

²⁵ Interview conducted in Harmanli on March 27, 2014. The case itself did not happen in 2014.

²⁶ Interview conducted in Harmanli on March 27, 2014. The case itself did not happen in 2014.

²⁷ Interview conducted August 12, 2012.

the current situation. In August 2012²⁸, BMB recorded accounts of violence reported during our research at the transit center in Pastrogor. Approximately one third of the 45 respondents in 2012 did testify about witnessed and/or experienced police violence. In one of the cases, a man from Syria, after refusing fingerprinting, was beaten by police officers and threatened with death if he does not comply.

Another reported case involved a man from Iraq²⁹:

When the police caught him they start beating him. He was like please don't beat me, please don't beat me. I am a refugee. I came to your country as a refugee. Please don't beat me. But they continued beating him. And he had a document, an ID that he is a footballer in Iraq. One of the police took the ID for his football team and threw it away. He just looked at it and said: footballer? And they threw it away while he was screaming please don't hurt me, I'm a footballer from Iraq, came to look for refuge in Bulgaria³⁰.

4. Institutional response to accusations of push-backs and violence

Bulgarian authorities have consistently denied reports of push-backs and violence without conducting further investigations. After BMB's publication of a report concerning the push-back of April 21 2014 (footnote 17), the director of Border Police, Zaharin Penov commented³¹:

Yes. The case that was just commented upon most probably concerns a case that has taken place on the 21st of April in the early afternoon in the area of border pyramid 212, on the territory of Bolyarovo municipality. There, on the 21st, a Bulgarian border guard has detected the presence of five persons immediately to the border line on Turkish territory. According to the agreement with Turkey, the Turkish authorities were informed... [These people] have never been on Bulgarian territory... This statement [that the case commented upon is not an isolated one] is certainly not true. There are no such practices in this direction that are used by Bulgarian border authorities. In this area except Bulgarian border guards there are also 37 [foreign] officers from 11 member states.

Four days before the publication of HRW' report, minister Iovchev commented on some of the organization's findings³²:

²⁸ BMB conducted the research between August 11-19, 2012. 45 people were interviewed.

²⁹ Interview conducted in Patrogor on August 18, 2012.

³⁰ The narration is in the 3rd person because it is recorded in translation by the interpreter.

³¹ Interview conducted by Tanya Velichkova for Bulgarian National Radio, 24.04.2014. <http://bnr.bg/horizont/post/100400902/zaharin-panov-opitite-za-preminavane-na-granicata-ni-se-podpomogat-ot-kanaldjii> Accessed June 7, 2014.

³² Vesti. 2014. <http://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/politika/iovchev-hiumyn-rajts-uoch-lyzhe-za-granicata-s-turcia-6010656> Accessed June 7, 2014. HRW's response can be downloaded here: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Mo15_20_2014_English.pdf Accessed June 15, 2014.

I wouldn't go into details about the cases mentioned in the report but there are things that are blatant lies that could be easily checked. For example, that the Bulgarian border police are not armed with weapons that have butts. Meaning that there is no way [the border guard] can beat refugees with butts as they do not have weapons with butts. I have to admit as well, that our border guards, that are at the border, do not own, they do not have electric sticks. There is no way they can maltreat refugees with electric sticks that they do not own.

He added:

We [Bulgaria] do not have soldiers at the border, also our border police does not have boots, therefore there is no way [border police] maltreats refugees by boots (Iovchev, 2014).

Conclusion

The consistent and systematic refusal of Bulgarian institutions to address the warnings issued by multiple international organizations and local NGOs impedes any possible cooperation towards the improvement of the treatment received by asylum seekers' from the Bulgarian state. Continuous and systematic practices of violence by the Bulgarian authorities at the border and inside the premises for registration and detention are a violation of human rights, which has not been addressed or investigated by the respective institutions in the country. **The decreasing numbers of asylum-seekers in the country is a direct consequence of grave violations of human rights standards and in direct violation of international conventions and national obligations.** Until such practices are discontinued, the country cannot guarantee secure and dignified treatment of all individuals at all stages of the asylum procedure.

II. FROM OVERCROWDED CAMPS TO THE PRODUCTION OF HOMELESSNESS

At the end of 2013 Bulgaria was heavily criticized for the conditions it offered in its camps and for the quality and pace of the procedure in a number of statements and reports by international organizations and local NGOs³³. Bad living conditions in the state accommodation centers were one of the reasons to ask for temporary halt of Dublin returns to Bulgaria. Although at the time of our research (March-June 2014) the Bulgarian state has put efforts in renovating the buildings and providing furniture and free meals, we are hesitant to say that the overall accommodation conditions have improved as to guarantee safe lodging for asylum seekers and refugees or dignified life. Our fieldwork and analysis show that the state managed accommodation centers are only one of the accommodation options for asylum seekers and refugees and the improvements there are not necessarily a sign of improved overall living conditions for those two groups.

Despite the renovations, there are some recurring material problems in the camps (like irregular electricity supply, lack of hot water, and sewage system blockages). However, significant problems have emerged and they are related to the management of the camps, the insufficient provision of services of medical care, interpreting and translation, and the dissemination of information regarding regulations and administrative procedures. Moreover, the seeming success in fighting the overcrowding in the camps comes at the expense of a growing homelessness among refugees and asylum seekers.

1. Conditions and services in the camps

A. Housing and material conditions

In addition to the existing reception and transition centers in Pastrogor, Banya and Ovcha Kupel (Sofia), four new camps have been opened since August 2013. Three of them have an open regime and one was of a closed type until January 2014: Voenna Rampa, Vrazhdebna, Kovachevtsi, and Harmanli. Attempts were made to open more camps in several other places in Bulgaria, but due to protests by locals and institutional opposition by the municipalities these plans failed (see footnote 61).

Some of the remaining problems in the camps are as follows:

- There is lack of or insufficient common space for asylum seekers to spend time outside of their rooms. For example in the camp of Pastrogor the common area, the library, the prayer room, and the computer room previously available, have been turned into sleeping areas during the months with the highest numbers of asylum seekers accommodated in the camp. Even though the overcrowding problem has been since solved, common areas have not been made available. In Harmanli designated common areas are still in the process of arranging.
- In April 2014 the material conditions in some of the camps were still highly unsatisfactory. For example in Voenna Rampa, in the building for single men, window panes were missing

³³ UNHCR: <http://www.refworld.org/publisher.UNHCR.,BGR,52c598354.0.html>, HRW: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/04/28/containment-plan>, Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR15/003/2013/en/3d683266-4c02-4cb2-aea5-e6eb2f666139/eur150032013en.pdf> Accessed June 8, 2014.

and in the big halls families still had to divide the space with bedsheets to maintain a sense of privacy. In the renovated areas, families still had to do the same.

- There is a persistent lack of common kitchen areas with available cooking utilities. In the camp of Pastrogor the place which used to be designated for a common kitchen has been transformed into a canteen. In Harmanli there were no current plans for building a common kitchen. In the absence of such spaces, people cook in the corridors, their rooms or in the bathrooms. There are plans to build kitchens on each floor in the camp of Vrazhdebna, which is a good practice that should be encouraged in the other camps.
- Availability of hot water and electricity has been reported as irregular in some of the camps. (e.g. Vrazhdebna, Harmanli, Ovcha Kupel, Pastrogor)
- Sewage system blockages and general hygienic conditions continue to be an issue in all of the camps, due to the insufficient numbers of toilets and bathroom facilities.

B. Social counseling and translation services

Lack of or insufficient social counseling continues to be a serious problem in all camps. During our research in the camps of Harmanli and Pastrogor asylum seekers reported that there were no social workers available or any other camp personnel who could provide information or counseling regarding the procedures, rights and obligations of asylum seekers and status holders in Bulgaria, on concrete regulations related to access to institutions, right and access to healthcare and social services, housing, and the labor market. SAR reports that since April 2014 there are social workers employed by the agency working alongside the social mediators from the Bulgarian Red Cross. However, their number is limited relative to the high numbers of camp residents and the efficiency of their work is yet to be assessed. Although there are efforts to provide support in languages other than Bulgarian, the success of those efforts is limited and covers predominantly Arabic speaking asylum-seekers, excluding those speaking other languages.

The availability of translators and interpreters in the camps remains insufficient. SAR interpreters do assist during the procedure interviews. However, designated interpreters for transmission of information, inquiries, or assistance with medical problems are not readily available for the asylum seekers and status holders residing in the camps. In the case of social workers and mediators doubling as interpreters, their number is insufficient. Information and everyday interaction between the staff and the camp residents continues to be managed mainly by other residents on a voluntary basis. There are numerous complaints in our interviews of insufficient or lacking provision of information in an understandable language on the procedure details, on the rights and obligations of asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria, on the conditions and regulations within the camps, on access to services, medical treatment etc. The legal practitioner, Borislav Dimitrov shares:

There are many complaints in regards to the work of the translators. Asylum-seekers complain that the translators from Farsi do not speak the language well enough. The translators, who speak Arabic, most of them Arabs, are rude and behave disrespectfully. People say that they would tell their story for two or three minutes and the translators would transmit it in two or three sentences. There is a mass of complaints after the issuing of decisions. What people see is that part of the statements in the decision have

never been stated or have been confused due to faulty interpretation. (interview, June 3 2014)

C. Medical services

Medical services and the provision of medications in all camps remain insufficient despite that there is medical staff on the territory of the camps and asylum seekers have their health insurance covered by the state for the period of the procedure. Until the end of April, the medical staff in some of the camps was made available by Medicines Sans Frontiers, and since SAR has taken over with medical staff employed by the Agency. The services provided and the medical supplies available have been reported to be insufficient during most of the interviews. In 2013 the medical services in the centers were covered by paramedics (with the exception of the center in Ovcha Kupel - see the [Ombudsman's report](#)³⁴). We could not get information from SAR about the changes introduced since April 2014.

A recurring problem was the lack of attention to serious complaints and the lack of medications. "Those, who have received status and live in the camps, have been denied medical attention from the medics in the camps as they have to cover their insurance monthly by themselves," reports Borislav Dimitrov. Referrals to specialists in hospitals outside the camps were also qualified as insufficient. The most common treatment that individuals with complaints would get was a painkiller. In the context of the previous deplorable conditions in the camps, the cold, humidity, overcrowding and bad sanitary facilities, many asylum seekers were in need of more careful medical attention. There were single reports of medical staff requiring bribes for further medical referral to specialists. In the cases of need of additional medication, the medical supplies were insufficient. Medication from pharmacies remains uncovered by health insurance in Bulgaria, which makes it practically unavailable for asylum seekers relying on their monthly allowance of 65 BGN (approx. 33€).

The national health care system requires asylum seekers and refugees to register with a general practitioner (GP) in order to gain access to free medical care³⁵. Because of insufficient information about the regulations for health care access and due to the fact that asylum seekers and refugees often move from one center to another, they often lose the registration for a GP and hence cannot receive free treatment. The Ombudsman is quoting as many as 400 refugees without the right to free health care in September 2013 due to the inconsistencies between the regulations for refugees and national health care regulations. Holders of refugee or humanitarian status have to cover their health care fees themselves and to take care of finding a GP to register with. This is problematic for most of them and they usually remain uncovered by the health care system.

There are no interpreting services for medical visits to local hospitals³⁶. For example, there were two cases of asylum seeking women (in Harmanli and Pastrogor) who gave birth in Bulgaria without any linguistic or social and cultural assistance provided during the process of birth-giving. They were not given instructions or information in a language that they could understand. One of the young mothers interviewed was not assisted or instructed on breastfeeding in a language that she understands and could not breastfeed her baby. There are no provisions for such services in

³⁴ Ombudsman. 2013. <http://www.ombudsman.bg/national-prevention/2819#middleWrapper> Accessed June 8, 2014.

³⁵ However, each visit to the GP requires a fee of 2 lv (1 euro), which has been reported to be too much for some asylum seekers and refugees (see the Ombudsman's report)

³⁶ BRC does provide such translation services but they only reach a very small amount of people.

other emergency cases or other medical cases involving hospital visits. This absence is an obstacle for getting appropriate medical care and puts asylum seekers at risk of misunderstanding, distress, and even wrong treatment.

D. Fines and administrative charges

According to the Law for refugees and the regulations of the camps, fines are imposed on asylum seekers and refugees in case they damage any property of the camp. The fines vary between 50 and 200 BGN (25-100 EUR), as postulated in the Law for Refugees and Asylum, Ch. 4, Art. 93, and thus by far exceed the financial capacities of some of the inhabitants of the camps, whose monthly allowance is 65 BGN. The fines are directly deducted from the monthly allowance, as reported by camp residents. The residents have a three day period to appeal. The protocols are distributed to them in Bulgarian language. BMB has recorded multiple complaints by camp residents who found the charges unfair. In all the cases, the residents in the camps were not aware they could appeal. This problematic practice of induced charges has been ongoing since 2012, with similar complaints having been reported across all camps.

2. Structural preconditions for the production of homelessness

Despite the very many regulations in regard to external addressing which are supposed to ease the situation of both asylum-seekers and camp administrations, many problems are readily identified on the ground. The perpetuation of extreme vulnerability in relation to housing arrangements throughout the country is an ongoing and persistent issue. Inconsistent and constantly changing regulations for accommodation of status holders and asylum seekers in and outside the SAR run centers have become a trend, which leads to a general state of confusion and chaos.

Currently, the majority of the people live outside the camps, at external addresses. According to SAR as of June 6, 2014, 50%, or 2 329 people live in SAR centers. The rest, 2 359 people, live at an external address. This means that at least 2 359 people are no longer financially supported by the state. The number is actually much higher if we add the status holders and people, whose procedure has been terminated or whose asylum request has been rejected.

A. External addresses for asylum seekers

The regulations of SAR allow for people still in asylum procedure to live outside the SAR residential centers by following a number of regulations. Any registered asylum-seeker is able to live at an external address after s/he submits her/his desire to do in written form to the camp administration and after she/he provides the administration with a proof of external accommodation (e.g. rent contract). In addition, SAR has to officially allow such a move. This option was preferred by a large part of the asylum-seekers, especially in the period of the overcrowding of the camps in the last months of 2013 and the beginning of 2014. The common understanding behind the option for 'external addresses' is based on the assumption that these people have enough resources to sustain themselves without state support while in Bulgaria. However, our research shows that the main reasons for moving out of the SAR centers are the conditions below the living standards, in combination with the recurring racism in and around the camps.

At the other end, living at an external address during the procedure creates conditions for the production of extreme social vulnerability:

- **The basic financial security provided by the state is lost.** The “external address” stipulates that once a person has moved out of the SAR center, s/he loses the right to the monthly social benefits of 65 BGN provided by the state.
- **The conditions under which asylum seekers find external address and sign contracts are often fraudulent** and do not guarantee secure housing. Many asylum seekers and refugees become victims of fraud by private persons who provide fake addresses or conditions different than those stipulated in the contracts. In practice, asylum seekers often end up living in insecure housing, without proper contracts and at risk of remaining homeless at any moment.
- There is a **widespread practice of faking address registration without having a secure housing contract.** Despite the strict regulations imposed by SAR, many of the contracts have been faked, a practice confirmed by the Ombudsman’s report which states that in the “applications for external addresses there are no more than 3-4 addresses [listed].”³⁷. This practice is conditioned by the difficulties in finding landlords willing to sign official contracts, the everyday racism (see more on this in Part V, the case of Rozovo), and the high rental prices. As a result, the majority of the cases of external addresses have been faked, leading to a large, unidentifiable number of people who have been or are homeless, or have found other means of housing (e.g. accommodation provided by friends and relatives who are not in position to declare renters). Moreover, schemes of corruption have been identified involving camp administration staff.
- The conditions **under which a person might or might not return to the camp once s/he has moved out are not clearly specified in the law.** Our interviews show that these regulations are not transparently explained to the individuals moving out of the centers. We have recorded complaints of people attempting to return to one of the camps, only to see their request rejected without a principled explanation. The conditions under which a person might or might not return to the camp once s/he has moved out are not clearly specified in the law. A lawyer working with refugees explains that “There is no such defined right in the Bulgarian law³⁸.”
- Some of **the rules in the centers enable easy expulsion of asylum seekers and refugees from the camps.** For instance, if they spend more than three nights outside the camp without permission they automatically lose their place there. While certain regulations are crucial for sustaining an orderly system, BMB is concerned that such practices generate unnecessary homelessness.
- Exposure to the risk of homelessness, also noted by [UNHCR](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), has resulted in what we refer to as “**outlawed stays.**” The “outlawed stays” refer to the fact that an unidentifiable number of people sneak into the camps and with the help of friends remain there (at least) during the nights so as not to be exposed to the dangers of sleeping in the

³⁷ Ombudsman. 2013. <http://www.ombudsman.bg/national-prevention/2819#middleWrapper>. A recent journalist investigation confirmed the observations in the Ombudsman’s report (<http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=3877317>). This practice has however been present at least since 2011. Accessed June 8, 2014.

³⁸ Interview conducted in Sofia on May 30, 2014.

streets (e.g. hate crimes, freezing nights, robberies, etc.). Refugees from the camp in Ovcha Kupel shared with us that the number of ‘outlawed stays’ has dropped significantly in the past few months because of a number of police raids in the camps³⁹. At the same time, at the time of writing this report, there are 2,258 available places at the refugee camps throughout the country, with 1129 in the capital city Sofia⁴⁰. The “outlawed stays” continue to this day. A woman in Ovcha Kupel shared: “I stay here illegally. I am afraid to be on the street at night and I depend on the good friends who are still in Ovcha Kupel to stay with them.”

In addition, BMB knows about ‘outlawed stays’ that have concerned unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers. After a forced relocation of unaccompanied minors to the center in Banya, all of them disappeared from the Banya center within a week. Some of them have sought after ‘outlawed stays’ in a reception centre in Sofia, however, afterwards they have been removed from the center and became homeless.

B. Prolonged stays in SAR centers for status holders

With the increased efficiency and faster procedures, one of the immediate problems faced by status holders is accommodation. The temporary solution of the Bulgarian government was to change the conditions for prolonged accommodation in the SAR centers after receiving a status. The earlier practice of requiring status holders to leave the SAR provided accommodation between 3 and 14 days after receiving a status has been reconsidered, allowing them to stay for up to 6 months. The sped up procedure for status decisions after January 2014 and the lower numbers of cases of border crossings, combined with the expansion of the available centers for accommodation have prompted SAR to begin allowing status holders to remain on the premises of the centers for longer periods. While this step has the potential to alleviate the problem of potential homelessness, the reality slowly shows that in fact homelessness is still being generated. BMB has identified a number of problems arising from this situation:

- **The conditions** for holders of refugee or humanitarian status in regard to address registration, issuing of documents and the right to keep their residence in the SAR centers for longer periods **have been changing during the last period, producing chaotic and unclear set of regulations which are in constant flux**. In addition, the information on the changing regulations is partial, unclear, and is not openly transmitted in understandable languages to status holders. For example, at the time of our research, residents in the camp of Ovcha Kupel were allowed to apply for an ID providing the camp’s address as a base for registration in a municipality. However, there have been reports of residents in the other two centers in Sofia (Voenna Rampa and Vrazhdebna) that were not to use the centers address to apply for IDs. These diverging conditions enable the unequal treatment of status holders depending on the SAR center they are residing in.
- **The regulations are flexible and can be easily revoked** if the general context changes (a new wave of asylum seekers, lack of funds to sustain the camps or an arbitrary decision). This creates a danger of expelling status-holders by the authorities on a whim, something already

³⁹ Interview conducted in Ovcha Kupel, Sofia, on May, 28.

⁴⁰ SAR. June 6, 2014. http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Refugees_06.06.2014.doc Accessed June 8, 2014.

taking place (see next bullet point).

- The lack of clarity of the regulations for prolonged stays for status holders in the SAR centers and the **constant changes in the regulations increase the risks of arbitrary rejections and corruption practices**. BMB has received alarming reports of cases when refugees were arbitrarily denied extended accommodation or asked for bribes. In interviews from June 2, 2014, three status-holders, all women, complained that they have been asked to leave the center in Ovcha Kupel despite the fact that they have received status less than six months ago. One of them is a single mother with one child. The other two are in Bulgaria with their husbands and their children – four and three children respectively. Another case involves a pregnant woman, with a status, living at an external address together with her husband, who has been denied the opportunity to return to a SAR center. Other cases include people being required a monthly payment by a camp employee to be allowed to stay in one of the camps.

A case shared by a refugee lawyer is telling⁴¹:

Clients of mine, a family with a small child, told me that an administrator in a refugee reception centre has taken their registration cards and has told them that they have to leave. He has ‘invited’ them to sign a declaration for an external address as if they want to go out of the camp voluntarily. The administrator also told them that he will return the registration cards once they sign the declarations. To this, the woman has protested by telling him that they are still in procedure and they are in the process of appealing their reject. According to the family, the administrator has further told them that they have no chance [to receive status] and have to leave as other people have such chance. He had taken over the role of deciding whom has or has not a chance [to receive a status]. As we called him to ask him what is happening and why is he asking people to leave the camp while in procedure, he made a U-turn. He denied such accusations, saying that this is his favorite family and he wants to help them. After our call he stopped doing this to them... I do receive calls by people telling me that people from SAR administration go around the rooms and ask people to leave.

- **The requirement to provide address registration⁴² outside a SAR center in order to apply for an ID and passport is not clear.** The law does not specify whether the address registration can be on the territory of a SAR center. In some of the centers status holders who have been allowed to prolong their stay, have been also allowed to register there. In other centers, this regulation was not clarified and status holders were informed that the address of the camp cannot be used for address registration, as it was reported in some of our interviews. This has resulted in a flourishing business of fake address registrations. A recent journalistic investigation revealed that the prices can reach up to 500 BGN (250 EUR)⁴³.
- **Prolonged stays in camps that are far from bigger cities**, which might provide better opportunities for integration and access to the labour market, **increase the risks of social and economic isolation**. While, it is important to sustain the practice of providing housing for

⁴¹ Interview conducted May 30, 2014.

⁴² The Law for Asylum and Refugees stipulates that refugees have to register with the local municipality within 14 days after leaving the SAR centers (Section III, Article 35)

⁴³ Trud. 2014. <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=3877317> Accessed June 8, 2014.

recent status holders, the containment in centers like Harmanli and Pastrogor only postpones the next stage of potential homelessness and unemployment. The lack of a mechanism for rent subsidies in a place chosen by the refugee makes the solution of prolonged stays in the SAR centers only temporary and unsustainable.

The number of homeless refugees and asylum-seekers on the streets of Bulgaria is unknown and thus far impossible to estimate.

Conclusion

Dignified living for asylum seekers and refugees continues to be not secured. Placing the emphasis on the material conditions by spending most EU funds on 'visible' improvements masks the absences in social support which are indispensable for the further survival of asylum seekers and refugees on the territory of Bulgaria.

There is a worrying inconsistency and constant change in the regulations at the centers, which makes it difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to be informed on the latest updates of regulations and creates conditions for corruption and differentiated attitude towards different individuals and groups.

The limited range of medications in the camps, poor provisions for people with special medical needs, and gaps in the national health-care system create the preconditions for easily falling out of state-provided medical care and lead to insufficient and delayed medical services despite the efforts of volunteers, NGOs and state employees.

III. INTEGRATION IN FLUX: A PATH TO EXCLUSION IN A STATE OF CHAOS

The large influx of asylum seekers to Bulgaria since August 2013 has posed serious challenges for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Bulgarian society. The Syrian crisis exponentially increased the number of asylum seekers. The increased numbers of subsequently granted protection statuses (especially since January 2014) means that thousands of refugees now have the legal permission to live and work in the country. However, there is hardly any institutionally assisted integration and social support for people in this situation.

The last National Integration Programme finished in 2013 and as of currently there is no operational Integration program in the country. This leaves the ever growing number of newly recognized refugees and humanitarian status holders in a void, without sufficient support from the Bulgarian institutions for further social inclusion and integration into Bulgarian society. Without such support, the newly recognized refugees are put in a highly vulnerable position, exposed to higher risks of extreme poverty, unemployment, homelessness, xenophobic and racist attitudes, and discrimination. Until a new, well designed and efficiently implemented Integration Programme is adopted and running, the beneficiaries of international protection are left without the initial financial, language and social support that an integration scheme provides. We insist that this blatant lack dramatically reduces their chances of social inclusion, and even of physical survival on the territory of Bulgaria.

The National Strategy for Migration, Asylum and Integration for the period 2011-2020 included a National Integration Programme for the period 2011-2013 and annual Action plans. A new and reformed National strategy on Integration has been in the process of drafting since the summer of 2013. The new Programme was published on June 25th 2014, six months after the last Programme finished, and with a plan to commence in 2015, conditional upon funding.

The new program involves major reforms, including a shift of institutional responsibilities and a process of decentralization involving multiple actors. A swift entry into operation would require quite some time before meaningfully reaching its beneficiaries. In the meantime, the sped up procedure for granting protection statuses targeted at the Syrian asylum seekers, means that in practice the numbers of newly recognized refugees will continue to swell. This means that an increased number of people will be in need of support for their first stage of integration. However, the Bulgarian institutions will not be able to provide this support in the foreseeable future.

The social and economic conditions in Bulgaria, aggravated by the continuing financial crisis, significant unemployment, and widespread poverty, combined with anti-immigrant public sentiments and everyday racism, especially against Muslims and Sub-Saharan Africans, heightens the risks of social and economic exclusion for asylum seekers and newly recognized refugees. In the absence of efficient Integration program they are left in an institutional void, deprived of crucial support in the riskiest period of their stay in Bulgaria.

The conception of the National Integration Programme 2011-2013 and its implementation by SAR has been strongly criticized in a number of expert monitoring reports and assessments⁴⁴. The

⁴⁴ see Vankova 2013, *Report on the Monitoring of the Execution of the National Programme for Refugees' Integration in Republic of Bulgaria (2011-2013) in 2013* and Deneva 2013, In UNHCR's *Access to Employment: For Beneficiaries of International Protection In Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia* <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/pdf/what-we-do/promoting-integration/access-to-employment-bulgaria-poland-romania->

highlighted issues were: insufficient financial support, the length of the support (up to 9 months with restrictions), rigid enrollment conditions, the centralization of the system mostly restricted to the capital city, the lack of or inadequate social counselling and other social services, insufficient language training, insufficient professional training, which is not adjusted to the labour market or to the needs and qualifications of the refugees, the exclusion of the most vulnerable groups (e.g. mothers with young children, people with disabilities, the elderly). A discrepancy between the Programme and the Law on Asylum and Refugees created the conditions to cut short the integration support from 12 months, as stated in the Program, to only 6 months, with the possibility of a 3 months partial extension through enrollment in vocational classes. Overall, the assessment reports note a low participation rate due to the issues listed above. SAR officials' reply to that, repeated on numerous occasions, has been that the newly recognized refugees are not willing to integrate.

The 2011-2013 integration Programme envisaged a maximum of 100 people enrolled per year. It provided support with language training and vocational courses, ensuring a minimal financial stipend (4 BGN per working day, planned to be raised to 8 BGN, not implemented until August 2013), health-care insurance, subsidy towards rent, and public transport tickets. In addition, it was supposed to provide support in accessing the labour market, unfortunately without any noticeable results⁴⁵. Despite the serious drawbacks of the program, its present utter lack condemns current status holders to a number of absences: no healthcare insurance covered for the first months, no consistent language training, no subsidy towards rent, and no monthly financial allowance, which were provided by the old Programme.

With the current Integration vacuum, status holders are exposed to risk and are placed in a highly vulnerable position. The following points are crucial:

- Recent status holders are not informed of the existence of an integration program, nor of the option of enrolling into one. Our research has shown that the employees in the camps are not aware of the new developments (at least they were not at the time of our research). In the camps of Harmanli and Pastrogor there is no information on the current developments or on the possibilities that the new Integration Program might offer. Moreover, some of the employees have shared concerns that they do not inform new status holders on the existence of an Integration Programme, because the numbers are limited and it is obvious not everyone can be included. Such instances of information withholding create the possibility for further exclusion. Even if a new Program starts being implemented soon, a large number of people will have been left uninformed because of the lack of information in the camps and the reluctance of the employees in the camps to provide understandable and clear instructions.
- The current absence of an Integration program and of Integration Centres, besides the one in the camp in Ovcha Kupel, enhances the general lack of information on administrative regulations related to address registration, health-care insurance, issuing of documents, access to unemployment bureaus, access to social services and benefits.
- The lack of consistent Bulgarian language education is a major impediment to any further attempts for integration. In March 2014, language classes for adult asylum seekers have had

[slovakia.html?sarched=neda+deneva&advsearch=allwords&highlight=ajaxSearch_highlight+ajaxSearch_highlight1+ajaxSearch_highlight2](#) Accessed June 8, 2014.

⁴⁵ More on the access to the labour market and the Integration programme until 2013, again in Deneva 2013 and Vankova 2012

just started in the camps with the support of Caritas, three times a week for three hours. These classes were predominantly directed at asylum seekers, as are other language courses organized by Caritas in Sofia. Recently, SAR has also started organizing language classes in the camps for those residing there. The availability of classes in the SAR camps is a potential basis for exclusion of all those residing outside the camps. While these initiatives are a positive development, they are no replacement for a systematic, all-encompassing and sustainable language training accessible for all those willing to participate in an Integration program. The Bulgarian Red Cross has also started the organization of Bulgarian classes but as of currently people usually drop out, as they have no means to support their transportation fees.

- Lack of financial support (which used to be conditional upon inclusion in the programme) intensifies the risks of extreme poverty and social exclusion in the first months after a protection status has been granted
- Lack of housing subsidies currently creates difficulties with living on an external address. While the previous scheme of providing housing subsidies contained a great number of problems⁴⁶, the lack of such a scheme for supporting people living at external addresses is more problematic. Currently there is zero support in finding external addresses and in paying the rent. In the first months, this means either choosing to live in the camp under problematic conditions and without any chance of integration, or paying high rents without having a job or state financial support. This situation tends to divide people by their financial standing, with the end result that those without financial means are classified as less deserving of integration into the Bulgarian society. To make matters worse, such division exposes them to the risks of extreme poverty and homelessness.
- Lack of support for the recognition of diplomas and qualifications, combined with lack of vocational classes for acquiring qualifications, further adds to the exclusion from the labour market.
- Lack of efficient support to access the labour market (based on integration efforts like language training, connections with employers, and recognition of qualification) intensifies the risks of deepening dependence on irregular work and middlemen, resulting in unemployment or precarious and extremely exploitative labour conditions.

After a six-month-delay, the government announced its strategy for the new integration program on June 25 2014⁴⁷. The implications of the reforms envisaged in the Integration Program may lead to problems. At this stage there are a number of serious concerns:

First, there is a proposal to shift responsibilities from SAR to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other institutional actors, including municipalities. While the shift is a positive development, recommended by earlier assessment reports, the initial transition stage involves a number of risks. Even if the new Program starts being implemented in the near future, the next steps of approving it by the Council of Ministers, and crucially, its implementation by new institutions

⁴⁶ UNHCR. 2012. Where is my Home: Bulgaria. <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/pdf/where-we-work/bulgaria/where-is-my-home-bulgaria.html> Accessed June 8, 2014.

⁴⁷ NoviniBG. 2014. <http://www.novini.bg/news/214334-%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B7%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82-%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B8%D0%B7-%D1%86%D1%8F%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0.html>

and new stakeholders might prove volatile and unstable in the upcoming months. This means a longer period of lack of efficient integration program for the current and future status holders.

Second, the restructuring of the program seeks decentralization by involving municipalities in the country. While a move towards decentralization is a crucial step, the involvement of new local and regional partners and actors lacking the experience in refugees integration will certainly create a buffer period in the proper implementation of the program, that might bring about further delays. The completely new scheme of funding based on the principle ‘the money follows the refugee’ entails a series of funding regulations, competitions, and distribution principles which require changes in the administrative regulations and multiple bureaucratic steps. While in the long run this might prove to be a positive step, at the moment it implies a slow and complicated start of the new program.

Third, the new Program will supposedly cover much higher numbers than the current 100 per year; it will provide language classes for six months and afterwards status-holders will have the opportunity to join training classes. The program will be running for up to a year. During the press conference in May, SAR officials made it clear that any actual numbers will be conditional upon additional EU funding. Currently, Bulgaria is not able to provide enough funds from the state budget for continuing an integration program which will cover the increased numbers of status holders in need of integration support. The implications of such an official statement is that any Integration Program to accommodate larger numbers of status holders, will be contingent on temporary support provided by the EU, rather than build a long-term strategy for sustainable integration and social inclusion.

At this stage it is very unfortunate to learn that the strategy announced in late June 2014 is only a strategy on paper as there is no secured funding for its implementation and “even the authors of the strategy call into question the performance of the program if funding is not secured (Novinite 2014, see footnote 47).” State funding could be secured only in 2015, and even then Bulgaria will only be able to provide partial funding for the numbers of refugees in need of integration. The rest of the funds will be sought from the EU. This leaves thousands of status-holders without any possibility for integration and social inclusion.

In the course of finalizing this report our attention has been also brought to a publication of a ‘Program for Employment and Training of Refugees’ on the legal news website Apis⁴⁸. The document has been published on the 24 March 2014. The only information on the website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is from 23 May 2014⁴⁹, where it says the program has started. There is no other official reference to this Program on the websites of the other involved institutions. There was no mention of this program in the press conference of SAR on 10 May 2014, when it was clearly stated the National Integration Program is still under discussion. It is unclear what is the relationship between this Employment program and the future National Integration Program. In our research, none of our interviewees was aware of the existence of such program. We did not find any information in any of the camps either. We offer a review of the document and will continue to follow closely the development of this program and the future Integration program for our next report.

The Employment program contains a number of positive developments: professional training implemented by institutions other than SAR, subsidized work places for status holders, hiring

⁴⁸ Apis. 2014. <http://blog.apis.bg/2014/03/prieha-programa-za-zaetost-i-obuchenie-na-bezhantsi-2014-g/> Accessed June 15, 2014.

⁴⁹ MoLSP. 2014. <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/news/news.asp?newsid=3578&catid=1> Accessed June 15, 2014.

unemployed status holders in the reception and transit center by SAR, and higher numbers than those included in the previously existing Integration Program (200 people for language training and 100 for professional courses), as well as decentralization and involvement of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (including the Employment Agency and Labor bureaus across the country) and the Ministry of Education.

Yet, there are a number of problematic issues at this point: the language training is very short, unless it is combined with additional training through the planned Integration Program (only 180 hours, which equals 3 months of 3 hours per day, 5 days a week). A second problem is that it only involves people who are registered as unemployed, which exclude those who might be engaged in low-skilled, low-conditioned labor and are still in need of language training and professional qualification. The third problematic issue is the length and the scope of the program which will only cover status holders from 2013 and 2014 and is planned until 31 December 2014, which means only 7 months after its supposed starting date at the end of May 2014. It is also unclear who will be the implementing actors in this program. Shifting the responsibility and including new actors in a moment in flux creates higher risks of longer period of adaptation until the program starts working efficiently. Moreover, workers in social services and labor bureaus have not worked efficiently with status holders until now, mainly due to lack of language proficiency. The program does not mention translation services. Finally, even though the number of 200 planned beneficiaries for language training and 100 for professional courses is higher than in the previously existing Integration program (only 100), it remains very limited as compared to the number of 6,104 protection statuses issued in 2013 and in the first four months of 2014 (of which 2,337 refugee statuses and 3,767 humanitarian statuses).

Conclusion

In brief, the current lack of a working and efficient Integration program to provide state support to newly recognized status holders contributes towards higher risks of exclusion, poverty and exposure to acts of racism and discrimination. It also increases the danger of a deepening dependence on irregular work and exploitation. In the context of the current economic crisis, a working and efficient integration strategy implemented by the Bulgarian state is a crucial precondition for providing a survival chance after receiving protection status.

IV. XENOPHOBIA AND RACISTS ASSAULTS: INSTITUTIONS, FAR-RIGHT, STREET VIOLENCE

The majority of the refugees we have interviewed have fallen victim of racist insults, discrimination and verbal hate attacks. A large portion either has witnessed or has been subjected to physical attacks. Growing nationalist and far-right tendencies in Bulgaria add up to make matters worse. BMB is extremely worried by the increase of racist attacks on the streets across the country, the entrenched institutionalization of racism, and Bulgaria's continuous unwillingness to deal in a due-manner with the above mentioned problems. Asylum-seekers, undocumented migrants and refugees are the immediate victims of these processes.

1. Institutional discrimination

A. The normalization of the racist discourse

A letter sent by Cecilia Malmström to the Bulgarian authorities in February, which expressed serious concerns over the country's unwillingness to deal with the 'refugee crisis' in general, and the access to Bulgarian territory in particular, prompted the Minister of Interior, Iovchev, to comment that critiques regarding Bulgaria not giving access to its territory are unfounded as Bulgaria does not have such obligations. His arguments were⁵⁰:

*First of all, Turkey is a third safe country and the obligations of accepting refugees to its territory are theirs and the countries neighboring Syria. Bulgaria has no such immediate obligations... Secondly, which is a serious argument, at the moment less than 50% from those crossing illegally can be qualified as refugees. **There are people, whom we suspect are linked to terrorist and extreme groups and such who are linked to extremely serious offenses** (Minister Iovchev, February 2014, our emphasis).*

According to a study conducted by Perceptia⁵¹, a company for media monitoring and analysis, "Tsvetlin Iovchev and Angel Naydenov fuel negative attitudes [towards refugees]." Ever since the influx of refugees to Bulgaria, the Minister of Interior has been consciously framing the issue as one of threat to the national security. In an interview from October 2013, Iovchev said⁵²: "What is coming is a threat to us [Bulgarians] as a nation. We have not been faced with a harder challenge to our national security in the past few years."

According to Perceptia, xenophobic members of the political party ATAKA and football ultras further fuel such attitudes.

BMB is concerned about the continuous spread of hate speech towards refugees at the highest political level. There are serious indications that such interventions by high-profile

⁵⁰ Mediapool. 2014. <http://www.mediapool.bg/tsvetlin-yovchev-ne-sme-dlzhni-da-dopuskame-svobodno-bezhantsi-news216312.html> Accessed 7 June, 2014

⁵¹ Capital. 2013. http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/bulgaria/2013/11/15/2183068_boino_pole_internet/ Accessed 7 June, 2014

⁵² BTV News. 2013. <http://btvnews.bg/article/bulgaria/iovchev-nyama-reshenie-za-izgrazhdane-na-bezhanski-tsentar-y-kazanlak.html> Accessed June 7, 2014.

politicians work to legitimize hate crimes on the streets, in public institutions and in the refugee camps across the country.

At the press conference of SAR on May 10 2014, the director of SAR, Nikolay Chirpanliev attributed problems in the material conditions in the centers, such as clogged pipes or people living in tents, to “the fact” that some of the Syrian refugees come from nomadic tribes and are not used to living in buildings and using bathrooms. This is a blatantly derogatory, discriminating, and unfounded statement, which only fuels negative stereotypes against asylum seekers and refugees in general. The regular appearance of such statements on the part of officials working with asylum seekers, as well as the lack of reaction to them – from institutions or the media, is a worrying indication of wide-spread and normalized racism in the state institutions directly responsible for managing the reception and integration of asylum seekers.

During our visits at the centers, the administration and the staff were openly referring to the asylum seekers and the refugees accommodated there as 'uncivilized', 'low educated', and 'unhygienic'. BMB was often told of instances of humiliating behavior on the part of the administration and the guards in the centers, as well as of cases of verbal abuse. A single mother from Nigeria complained of being called 'maymuna' (monkey) by the guards and that people from the administration avoided physical contact when they handed her the monthly allowance and showed repulsion towards her. She told us⁵³:

They [the administration] treat us like we are animals, like we are not people. Even the police call us majmuna [monkey]. These things were giving me suicidal thoughts. Good that I met ACET⁵⁴ (May, 2014)

Racist and derogatory treatment by employees and managers of the institutions on which asylum seekers and refugees depend is an unacceptable practice. These are widespread across all levels within these institutions and are not addressed in any systematic way.

B. Procedural discriminations

Since the eruption of the ‘Syrian crisis’ a lot of media and institutional attention, both national and international, has been placed on monitoring the conditions under which Syrian asylum seekers have been treated. All efforts of the Bulgarian state target and reach only Syrian asylum-seekers (see section V. Asylum Procedures). Meanwhile, there is an alarming discrepancy between the shortened procedure for Syrians and the long waiting times for non-Syrians. The fast procedures have benefited predominantly Syrian asylum-seekers, while asylum-seekers of other nationalities have reported extended periods of registration, extending in the region of months, and being told to “wait for the Syrians to be done first”. Similar delays have been reported in cases of status decisions in the camp of Pastrogor, where a family from Rwanda and a man from Côte d’Ivoire had their procedure put on hold for more than 8 months since they entered the country, without being given information on the reasons for the delay.

In addition, language support is mainly envisioned for Arabic, which is the spoken language for the majority of asylum seekers at the moment, and groups speaking other languages get insufficient access to support and services in their languages.

⁵³Interview conducted May 22, 2014.

⁵⁴ACET is an Assistance Center for Torture Survivors.

The differential treatment of different groups of asylum seekers based on their nationalities is discriminating and ungrounded. Africans are reported to be even more exposed to racist comments or attacks, on the streets and in the camps. A man from Ghana explained⁵⁵:

But the problem we are facing now, they are not attending to us, because we're black. And the citizens, the Bulgarian citizens, they don't want to see black. When you go outside the camp...problem. Two times now outside the camp they have pursued me. They've stolen my phone from me (March 2014).

Racist attitudes and the slowing down of procedures - prolonging the period of residence without a status, put “non-Syrian” asylum seekers in a vulnerable position.

2. Far-right in Bulgaria: high politics and street violence

In recent years, an assorted variety of nationalist far-right formations have claimed their place in the political life of the country. The actions and statements of their leaders and members have been consistently racist and anti-refugee oriented. The far-right political party ATAKA (often described as neo-Nazi) has been represented in the parliament since 2005. The unstable political situation in Bulgaria has produced a tendency of government formation by coalitions of two or more parties, which increased the importance of ATAKA as a political partner. Their ascent to political power thus far blocked the possibility of an openly anti-racist state policy. ATAKA has significantly influenced the reaction towards the “refugee wave” in the country, both at the institutional and street levels. ATAKA is openly against the reception of refugees.

The other nationalist party represented in state institutions, VMRO⁵⁶, has also expressed anti-immigrant sentiments. With the growing number of asylum-seekers in the midst of the Syrian crisis the party staged a protest at the Turkish-Bulgarian border symbolically sealing it off with a chain of supporters⁵⁷.

The growing and unrestrained anti-immigrant sentiments gave birth to yet another far-right party on November 9, 2013, the far-right Nationalist Party of Bulgaria⁵⁸ (NPB). It attracted supporters of numerous neo-Nazi formations such as the Bulgarian National-radical Party, Bulgarian National Union, ATAKA, Blood and Honor, among others. The party draws strong analogies to the Golden Dawn in Greece.

⁵⁵Interview conducted March 27, 2014

⁵⁶Some of VMRO's activities in the past few years include but are not limited to: In 2011 VMRO organized a protest against Jehovah witnesses in Burgas which turned into a pogrom. VMRO is co-organizer of the annual Lukov march which gathers neo-Nazis and nationalists throughout Europe (e.g. the forbidden in Russia Slavic Union, neo-Nazi formations from Germany). Angel Jambazki, one of the leaders in the party and currently elected MEP, has numerous times voiced his support for anti-LGBT activities; for the pogroms against Roma and Turkish minorities that took place in 2011; and numerous others discriminatory and openly racist conducts.

⁵⁷Dnes BG. 2013. <http://www.dnes.bg/politika/2013/09/22/akcija-na-vmro-blokira-granicata-s-turcija.200193>. The banner held by the protester read „The state is rotting, the problem is in you“ Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁵⁸The party did participate in the European elections in a coalition with other nationalist formations.

In November 2013, after a young woman in Sofia was attacked by an immigrant from Algeria⁵⁹, members of NPB, together with neo-Nazi football ultras and the far-right formation National Unity, organized “civil patrols” patrolling the areas where immigrants and asylum seekers were known to live and gather. The patrols were organized as a pretext to protect citizens from street violence but were in fact a direct reaction to the large number of asylum-seekers and refugees. Migrants share that they are scared to be walking on the streets of Sofia, especially during night time, and that they often fall victim of racist attacks. The claims of the organizers that the patrols were allowed by the Ministry of Interior were later denied by Ministry officials.

Alongside the patrols, anti-immigrant protests were staged in the capital with hundreds of people shouting nationalist and racist chants. A number of racist attacks were reported, with one Bulgarian citizen of Turkish origin beaten to a coma after being mistaken for an immigrant. The authorities responded by organizing control raids in hostels known for hosting immigrants to check for their legal status and their right to reside in the country.

3. Public attitudes against refugees: the case in Rozovo

On April 26, 2014, 17 Syrian holders of humanitarian status, 6 children among them, were chased out of Rozovo – a village near Kazanlak, Bulgaria⁶⁰. The refugees have arrived in the village a few days before having rented a local house. Their presence in the village sparked protests on the part of the local population. The protests took place in front of the rented house and were accompanied by hate speech and threats of physical assaults. A [video shot by Zdravei Bulgaria](#)⁶¹ shows local villagers hanging a Bulgarian flag on the fence of the house where the refugees were accommodated, and shouting: “Bulgaria to the Bulgarians!” Some of the locals explained their resilience towards accepting the refugees on their territory as such:

I hear in the news [about the refugees] and I think that they are worse than the Gypsies. We want our village back. We don't want mangalya⁶², scum and vermin in the most [ethnically] clean village in Bulgaria.

A 12-year-old Bulgarian child explains:

⁵⁹ DarikNews. 2013. http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=1167996 Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁶⁰ There are several instances of protests against asylum-seekers and their potential placement throughout Bulgaria: Telish, Bulgaria, on November 4, 2013, the local people in Telish blocked the road Pleven-Sofia in a protest against the alleged construction of a refugee camp. The protests were organized despite that there has never been official information about such construction. Kazanlak, Bulgaria, around October 20, 2013, the local people in Kazanlak organized a protest against the potential construction of a refugee camp. Hundreds have participated in the protest; 5200 signatures are collected in less than 48 hours. Slaveino, Bulgaria, on November 25, 2013, the local villagers in Slaveino threatened with protests if the Bulgarian government decides to undertake the construction of a refugee camp in the village. Sliven, Bulgaria, 24 November, 2013, ATAKA organizes a protest against a potential construction of a refugee camp in the city. Also, numerous protests in Harmanli before and after the placement of asylum-seekers.

⁶¹ Nova News. 2014.

<http://novanews.bg/news/view/2014/04/28/74124/%D0%B6%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%BE-%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%BF> Accessed June 7, 2014

⁶² Derogatory reference towards Roma people

“I have heard from the news that among [the refugees] there are very bad people who kill Bulgarians. They come here to take advantage of Bulgaria’s resources. Of course, there are also good people among them... If the good people come they can live here as there will be no danger, just not the criminals.”

“We don’t want to involve ethnic relations but these people have no place in the village... not to get to the point of breaking windows, fights, and breaking heads. We [the villagers] were promised, I am not going to comment who promised us, that until Monday the problem will be resolved somehow. It has to be understood that Bulgaria is for the Bulgarians!” explains a local man.

After three days of revolts, the Syrian families were chased out of the village⁶³. They were taken out of the house with police help due to fears for their safety. The families claimed severe fear after the incident and one of them suffered a heart attack. At the time of writing he is still receiving treatment in a Sofia hospital.

SAR refused to recognize the xenophobic incident in Rozovo as one driven by racism. During a press-conference its representatives described the events as a personal conflict between the owner of the house and the rest of the villagers. The State Prosecution reacted to the incident by initiating checks on the legal status of the refugees and their right to live outside the centers.

A racist attack that took place on April 19, 2014 is exemplary of current attitudes. That day, a French citizen was severely beaten by a group of skinheads in Sofia. The woman was waiting for a bus when a group of men, imitating monkey sounds, started shouting “Hold the nigger!” The woman, together with her Bulgarian friends, was attacked shortly after. According to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee,⁶⁴ the woman suffered wounds and bruises to her forehead, nose, waist, right arm and knee, subcutaneous hematoma on her leg, bruised eyelids, mouth and left arm. In addition, the woman has undergone severe psychological trauma and is afraid to leave the house and even show on the balcony.

Against all of evidence that the attack has been a racist one, the Court proceedings settled for an accusation of “inflicting light bodily injury based on hooligan motives.”

The lack of commitment on the part of the Bulgarian authorities to condemn and punish racist attacks, behaviour and speech has been noted by multiple NGOs. In December 2013, Amnesty International⁶⁵ warned that, “The Bulgarian authorities must take a clear and public stance that xenophobic and racist violence will not be tolerated. Refugees and migrants must be protected from any further harassment and violence.” Instead, the reaction of Bulgarian authorities in the cases described above, few among several, is one of refusal to deal with xenophobic and racist crimes. This approach justifies and perpetuates further violence against vulnerable groups in general, and refugees in particular. [Despite the joint statement of PM Oresharski and President Plevneliev from November 2013](#)⁶⁶, against the rise of xenophobic violence, there are no serious actions undertaken in regard to such crimes. For the most part, xenophobic and racist crimes continue to be treated as instances of hooliganism.

⁶³ Mediapool. 2014. <http://www.mediapool.bg/siriyskite-bezhantsi-ot-selo-rozovo-byaha-izseleni-news219601.html> Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁶⁴ BHC. 2014. <http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/novini/press/single/pressobshenie-bhk-poema-delo-za-poboj-na-skinheds-nad-chernokozha-frenska-grazhdanka/> Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International. 2013. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/bulgaria-must-rein-xenophobic-and-racist-violence-after-seven-attacks-month-2013-12-02> Accessed June 7, 2014.

⁶⁶ EU Business. 2013. <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/bulgaria-racism.rdp> Accessed June 7, 2014.

Conclusion

- Bulgaria demonstrates an extreme case of institutional racism, including racist interventions of top-level politicians, which works to fuel violent physical attacks.
- Physical attacks on asylum-seekers and refugees have lately intensified. This poses serious threats to their physical survival on the territory of the country.
- Media reports and comments of high level politicians have resulted in extreme discriminatory speech and behavior perpetrated towards asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Bulgaria refuses to address hate crimes in a due manner. On the contrary, by its inaction, the country helps fuel attacks based on racial grounds.

V. ASYLUM PROCEDURES: THE LEGAL EXPERTS' OPINION

One of the arguments of UNHCR and HRW for the improvement of the conditions for asylum seekers and refugees concerns the improved procedure for seeking and obtaining asylum in the country. The HRW's report from April 2014 states that "Until recently, there were chronic delays of several months between the time an asylum seeker submitted an asylum claim ... and when SAR registered the claim. During this time, the asylum seeker was considered an irregular immigrant, was likely to be detained, and was at risk of being deported. The chronically slow Bulgarian asylum process improved dramatically during the spring of 2014..."

Since our interviews with asylum seekers from nationalities other than Syrian (e.g. from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Mali, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, etc.) showed a number of complaints about the procedure, BMB sought after expert opinion on the situation concerning asylum procedures in Bulgaria:

Dr. Valeria Ilareva, Foundation for Access to Rights, lawyer.

VI: There has never been a period when the statuses were easily given in Bulgaria. At the moment SAR gives statuses to Syrians. Certainly, everybody has complained that they have been discriminated against because of the Syrian population. It is quite normal that people compare themselves to the group that acquires status more easily, but I do not think that the situation of the rest has become worse because of the Syrian population. What is happening is that [SAR] gives status to the Syrians and for the rest [the situation] remains just as before. **Where we witness a worsening of the situation is not so much linked to the provision of status but perhaps to the duration of the procedure, the access to the procedure (e.g. how much time one has to wait for registration), an increase in the detention period** for those who are not Syrians, while they are waiting to be registered, the so-called immigration detention, while waiting registration. There were clear indications that other nationalities wait more so they can be released from immigration detention, to register them in SAR.

BMB: Do Bulgarian authorities still detain people in Lyubimets and Busmantsi after they have crossed the border [and asked for asylum] and have gone through the center in Elhovo or are they sent to the reception and transit centers?

VI: Unfortunately, this is the practice in Bulgaria.

BMB: It is still being done?

VI: Yes. Because [Bulgaria] has a gap between the moment of submitting the application and the moment of registering the application [with SAR]. The gap is arbitrary. There are no terms, there are no rules. You stay and you wait. According to Bulgarian law, there is no rule that stipulates how much you have to wait for registration. According to European directives the registration has to take place with the application for asylum. Meaning, from the moment one submits an application, he or she has to be treated as an asylum-seeker. In Bulgaria we introduce such a gap, which contradicts European law."

Borislav Dimitrov, Center for Legal Help Voice in Bulgaria, volunteer legal practitioner.

BMB: How would you comment on the asylum procedures since 2013?

BD: It is worse because the capacity of the Agency is directed towards processing the requests with priority. You definitely cannot fail to recognise the fact that the requests of the Syrians, and I do not mean to say anything bad with this, I am not against it, but the fact is that the requests of the Syrians are being processed much faster. In the time a Syrian would receive a status and get issued his or her identification card, a person from Africa may be registered or may not be. But certainly an African would not have a second interview within the same period.

BMB: Can you give us examples?

BD: The most recent one concerns a person from Mali. He has one rejection. After which he submits [a second asylum request]. He came to us in the beginning of his second procedure. He submitted a second request in the beginning of January, which, until April, was still not registered. So we submitted a court case to the administrative court about the lack of action on the side of the Agency [SAR] for his registration. We won the case and the court postulated that he should be registered by the Agency within 14 days, he should be issued the appropriate documents and a procedure [for his asylum request] should be started. Which did not happen after those 14 days. We wrote a request, in which we informed them, with the court decision attached, and we asked them to take actions towards the registration of his case. Nothing happened, so he came again on Tuesday, June 3, and there was still no change, nobody had called him from the Agency. We wrote a request again, attached his request for asylum and the court decision once again. We sent it via e-mail to 3-4 of the e-mail addresses of the Agency and, in addition, I gave the documents to him to bring them and get them filed at the Agency, asking them again to respect the court decision and register him. On the next day, he was arrested in front of the building where he lives, for lack of documents and not being able to prove his identity. They brought him to the 6th Police Department, where I visited him, and now he is forcibly detained in Busmantsi. At the Police Department I spoke to the officer from [Direction] Migration and to the officers from the Department. I tried to explain to them that what they are doing is unlawful, because there is a court decision and they should not arrest him and put him in Busmantsi but should instead register him, as prescribed by the court. There was no result and at the moment he is in Busmantsi. This happened on June 4, and his asylum request is from the beginning of January. After waiting for 5 months for his request to be registered, he ended up in Busmantsi.

BMB: How many similar cases do you have?

BD: Many. Not all of them end up in Busmantsi but people who are not registered... many. Another recent case. An Iranian man submitted a second application [for registration] in the beginning of March [2014]. To date, the Agency has not registered him. The Agency was given a decision by the Administrative Court to undertake actions in regards to the man's registration in a 14-day-period. Ultimately, the Iranian citizen is still waiting in a particularly vulnerable position for more than three months so as to be registered and to take advantage of the rights given to asylum-seekers in accordance to

the Bulgarian Law. This same man knows very good English, and Farsi, and he has been offered a good job which he cannot accept as he has no identification card because of the inactions of the Agency in regards to his registration. They [the Iranians] regularly do not get registered. Especially Africans, Afghanistans, Iranians, Iraqis, I have the feeling the majority are Africans. They are regularly not registered on time, not only not on time, but for months. And regularly after being registered they wait for months until their second interview.

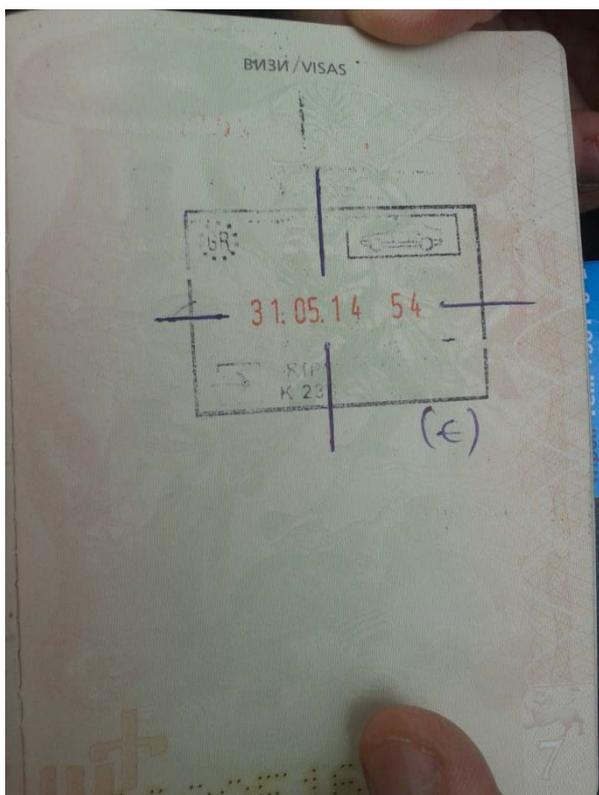
I have a case of a man from Iraq who has a status mandated by the UN Commission in Syria. In spite of this SAR has rejected his application. He won the two consequent court cases both in the Administrative Court and the Supreme Court. The Administrative Court rescinded the decision of SAR and ruled in favor of humanitarian status, but SAR appealed against the Court's decision. The Supreme Court confirmed the decision of the Administrative Court and ruled that SAR shall issue a humanitarian status. Despite the decision of the Supreme Court which came in April, the man is still waiting, it is already June and there is no action undertaken on part of SAR in regards to respecting the decision of the Supreme Court.

BMB: How long has the man been in Bulgaria?

BD: Since 2011. He has lost all hope.

VI. EUROPE'S MOST UNWANTED: RESTRICTIONS ON FREE MOVEMENT

SAR can provide two types of protection to asylum seekers – refugee and subsidiary (or humanitarian) status. Both categories are entitled to travel documents, which they can use to travel outside Bulgaria. However, the conditions for traveling abroad are different for the two groups. According to Bulgarian law, the holders of refugee status can travel to other countries on the same conditions like Bulgarian citizens, while the holders of humanitarian status are subject to the conditions that apply to foreign citizens with permanent residence in Bulgaria. In addition, every country within the EU and the Schengen area can determine their own conditions of traveling⁶⁷. This creates an arbitrary and irresolvable situation for holders of status in Bulgaria. Until recently, in actual practice, the two categories travelled within the EU under the same conditions – up to three months visa-free non-work related travel or apply for a work permit. The different conditions for traveling abroad for the holders of the two types of passports (the refugee one being valid for 5 years, while the humanitarian one for 3 years) only surfaced in April 2014 after a long period of relatively unproblematic movement of people with humanitarian status to other EU countries. As of April 2014, the holders of humanitarian status were systematically being denied entry to other EU countries.



⁶⁷

The Bulgarian Law of Asylum and Refugees provides, Art. 42. (1) The certificate for traveling abroad issued to a refugee entitles the holder to exit and enter the Republic of Bulgaria within the period of its validity under the terms and conditions for Bulgarian citizens as far as the country to which [he/she] travels does not provide other requirements. (2) The certificate for traveling abroad of a foreigner with humanitarian status entitles the holder to exit and enter the Republic of Bulgaria in the period of its validity under the terms and conditions for foreigners with permanent residents in Bulgaria.

Austria was the latest EU country to impose visa requirements for holders of subsidiary status on April 17th 2014⁶⁸. Just a couple of days before that BMB was told the story of a Syrian family with subsidiary status that managed to fly from Sofia to Vienna on April 15th without having to apply for visa at the embassy.

BMB had recorded numerous cases of Syrians with humanitarian status who were denied entry to Greece and Romania at the border. People that unsuccessfully attempted to cross the border had their Passports of Subsidiary Protection Beneficiaries stamped with reasons for denial of entry. These were either “invalid travel document” or “has no appropriate documentation justifying the purpose and conditions of stay. The following document(s) could not be provided...” (see Appendix 2). To the knowledge of BMB, people attempting to apply for a visa at the Swiss, Austrian, Romanian, Belgian, and Swedish embassies were denied visas on the pretext that their passports are not a valid document for traveling abroad. Since both Bulgaria and Romania are striving to become part of the Schengen area there is considerable international pressure on them to ensure efficient border protection.

We heard a number of cases where members of the same family unit were granted different statuses which led to potential family separation, given the differential treatment of refugee and subsidiary status holders at the border.

Since April 2014, Syrian refugees have been staging protests in front of the building of the European Commission in Sofia demanding an official position on their right to free movement in the Union. The protests were provoked by the deep insecurity for their physical survival as well as by the impossibility to travel to other EU countries. The two are interconnected. The protesters demand that EU countries reconsider the sealing of their borders to status-holders coming from Bulgaria because the latter can result in a serious infringement upon their chances of physical survival. As one of the protesters told us⁶⁹:

If we are not to be allowed to travel to the EU, at least [the Bulgarian authorities] shall stop kicking us out from the camps, to start paying us social money and to help us with finding a job, so we can live in Bulgaria. Every day there are people kicked out from the camp in Ovcha Kupel, people with humanitarian status. They cannot afford an apartment, their children are not in school, they are not [socially] secured. There must be an integration program so people can live normally. They can't just give us Bulgarian classes, we need jobs and schools (June 2014).

The protests mentioned above come as a deep concern in regard to the untenable social situation of refugees in Bulgaria and to the refusal of access to other member states. They represent a reminder that there is an urgent need for the Dublin regulation to be revisited and rethought. Such calls are in place for years now. We stand in agreement with numerous reports that voice their concerns over the Dublin regulation and the insolvable problems that stem from it. On the backdrop of the socio-economic situation in Bulgaria, we can conclude that the Dublin regulation stands in violation of one of the fundamental European principles, namely *shared solidarity*. Moreover, the Dublin regulation places asylum-seekers in serious danger as they are “imprisoned” in economically

⁶⁸ News in Bulgarian: <http://btvnews.bg/article/bulgaria/siriiski-bezhantsi-zaminali-za-avstriya-se-vrashtat-unas.html>

⁶⁹ Conversation conducted June 2, 2014.

and socially peripheral countries such as Bulgaria, where unemployment and poverty reign. This is a dangerous game.

BMB has no doubt that the Dublin returns to Bulgaria have to cease immediately until the country can assure discrimination free legal proceedings, non-arbitrary asylum procedures, no push-backs, and social support. Furthermore, basic needs such as housing and medical services remain ill addressed, which exposes refugees and asylum-seekers to extreme danger. The physical survival of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country are threatened by racist attacks, homelessness, impossibility to find employment, and by a worsening of the socio-economic conditions in the country. The improvement of material conditions in the camps are not a reason for European countries to remain off guard.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We urge the Bulgarian authorities to immediately investigate and prevent the occurrence of push-backs at the border. In addition, we urge international bodies to thoroughly consider a closer monitoring at the Bulgarian-Turkish border in order to prevent push-backs and violence. The in compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement* is in violation of international conventions and prevents people from exercising their right to seek protection on the territory of a member-state. Europe's silence and inaction in regard to cases of push-backs in Bulgaria effectively gives asylum seekers the signal that they are not welcomed in order to be protected.

2. We recommend more efforts to be made to increase the number of social workers, medical staff, and translators to assist on an everyday basis. The state should provide more information and assistance regarding the legal right of asylum seekers to free legal representation, medical care, and address registration, to avoid the flourishing of corruption practices. The existing structures that allow for corruption practices threaten the physical survival of asylum-seekers and refugees and must be terminated.

3. Regulations shall envision the possibility for all asylum-seekers to get accommodation in the respective centers throughout the period of their procedure as prescribed by the Bulgarian Law for Asylum and Refugees and the European Directive 2013/33. BMB welcomes the decision on the part of SAR to extend the accommodation period for people who have received status and urges the Bulgarian government to extend such possibilities in an officially regulated form. Moreover, we propose for allowing people who have left the camps to an external address and who are still in procedure, to be given the opportunity to return to the camps in a regulated form, to receive the state social benefits, preventing them from being subdued to the hardships of "outlawed stays" and corruption.

4. We encourage institutions to cooperate and find solutions in relation to the gaps that persist in health care provisions (e.g. registering with GPs and falling out of the health care system after receiving a status).

5. Enabling full participation in the (future) National Integration Program of all parties concerned is an indispensable condition for social inclusion. Therefore, more efforts shall be directed towards a the implementation of a timely, all encompassing, and efficient new Integration Program without further delays.

6. We insist that physical attacks based on racial hate and hate speech shall be taken very seriously by Bulgarian authorities and should not be registered as "hooliganism". Physical attacks against asylum-seekers, undocumented migrants, and refugees shall be investigated thoroughly and addressed as hate crimes.

7. The Bulgarian authorities shall ensure that asylum-seekers and refugees are treated in a humane, non-discriminatory and respectful manner. Everyday racism in the camps, humiliating behavior in police stations, detention facilities, and reception centers must be halted.

8. The improved asylum procedure for Syrian citizens cannot come at the expense of the rest of the asylum-seekers. We urge the Bulgarian government to treat all asylum-seekers on an equal basis. In addition, there are still gaps in Bulgarian law regulating asylum procedures. They shall be addressed in such a way as to comply with European standards.

9. Contrary to the most recent UNHCR's report from April 15, 2014, BMB has identified numerous problems in the asylum system in the country that present a great challenge for the socio-economic inclusion and physical survival of people seeking protection in Bulgaria. Among them: denied access to Bulgarian territory, slowed down procedure for non-Syrians, very problematic housing arrangements, intensified homelessness, inadequate medical help, differential treatment of different groups, unequal access to legal protection, risk of arbitrary imprisonment especially among Sub-Saharan Africans, intensified physical attacks and openly racist attitudes.

10. Based on the above we recommend the European Union member states to halt Dublin returns to Bulgaria until the Bulgarian state can ensure that the issues identified are dealt with in a due-manner. In addition, the Council of the European Union shall revisit the Dublin Regulation in general so as to ensure not only shared European border control (e.g. FRONTEX, EURODAC), but also equal distribution of responsibility for social inclusion and integration.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report has gained from the valuable knowledge of various people with different backgrounds to whom we are grateful.

We would like to first extend our gratitude towards all the asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrants who have shared their, often painful, insights. We also thank the families of the pushed back victims who did not spare time in order to help us locate people and better understand what is taking place at the Bulgarian border. This report is meant to humbly help them to arrive closer to the only endeavor they have undertaken – a dignified life.

We are thankful to Florin Faje for proof reading and a critical view and to Tobias Klaus and Bernd Kasperek for timeless discussions and invaluable advices.

Dr. Valeria Ilareva and Borislav Dimitrov helped us tremendously with their professional knowledge and expert opinions.

We would also like to thank the Bulgarian authorities for providing us with access to various camps and institutions. We hope that in the future we will establish better collaboration in order to better the protection practices in Bulgaria.

We would like to thank the financial supporters of this project Stiftung für Bevölkerung, Migration und Umwelt (BMU) and Stiftung:do for providing us with partial funding for the research and writing of this report.

Finally, we extend our special gratitude to Bordermonitoring EU for providing us with unconditional support throughout the writing and finalizing the report.

APPENDIX 1

- Всички жители на РПЦ-Харманли са длъжни да спазват законите на Република България, правилника на центъра и реда в гр. Харманли. Най-важните от тях са:
1. Да изпълняват безпрекословно разпореденията на администрацията на центъра
 2. Да не вникат и крещят, да бъдат смирени
 3. Да не се бият помежду си, да се уважават и да си помагат
 4. Да носят постоянно със себе си баджовете и зелените карти и при поискване да ги показват
 5. Пред сградата на администрацията да пазят тишина. Забранено е да влизат в сградата без да бъдат поканени. Чакането е до стълбите
 6. Да си плащат наложите глоби за неизпълнение на законите, правилника и установения ред в размер от 50 до 200 лв. (25 евро до 100 евро)
 7. Забранено е преместването в други стаи без разрешение на настанителите.
 8. Постоянно да се поддържа чистота в стаите за живеене, коридорите, тоалетните и районите около сградите.
 9. При счупване на имущество до 8 дена да се заплатят и възтановят. Не може да се отиде на адрес докато не заплати.
 10. При раздаване на помощи се нареждат на опашки с талони в ръце, баджове и зелени карти. Ако липсва нещо от тези документи няма да се дават помощи на нарушителите.
 11. При посещение на делегации бъдете усмихнати и разговарийте тихо, без да се мика и крещи.
 12. Излизането на адрес става само от 10:00 ч. до 15:00 ч.
 13. Излизането през портала става като се остави баджа на портала и се покаже зелена карта. Време за престой в Харманли 09:00 - 19:30ч. (за по-късна само с разрешение от настанителите след подаване на молба до тях).
 14. Вие не трябва да помагате при товарене и разтоварване на стоки, помощи и други работни дейности посочени от администрацията на центъра. Никой няма право да стъква

15. Забранено е употребата на алкохол. Пушенето да става на определените места.
16. Всеки един излязъл в Харманли ще бъде проверван от Полицията за спазване реда и носене на зелена карта. При нарушение ще бъде арестуван до 3 денонощия.
17. Да се проявява търпение за получаване на статут. Нетърпеливостта може и да не получат статут, ако нарушат взаимоотношенията с администрацията.
18. Тези които не носят баджове няма да бъдат обслужвани от администрацията и по-късно ще получат статут
19. Адрес за живеене в РПЦ-Харманли ще се дава само на тези които не създават проблеми, дисциплинирани са, спазват правилника, реда и законите в Република България.
20. Забранено е изхвърлянето на боклук на други места освен в контейнерите.
21. Организаторите на бунтове ще бъдат съдени съгласно българските закони. Не познаването на правилата не освобождава от наказателна отговорност.

All residents of reception center Harmanli must adhere to the laws of Republic of Bulgaria, the rules established in the center and the rules established in the city of Harmanli. The most important being:

1. To carry out orders without questioning the administration of the center.
2. Not to yell and shout, to be humble.
3. Not to fight between each other, to respect and to help each other.
4. To carry badges and green cards at all times and to show them when asked to do so.
5. To keep silence in front of the administration building. It is forbidden to enter the building without being called for. The waiting happens next to the stairway.
6. To pay the imposed fines for non-compliance with the laws, regulations and the established rules. The fees vary between 50 to 200 leva (25 euro to 100 euro).
7. Moving to another room is forbidden without the agreement of the staff responsible for accommodation.
8. To constantly keep clean the rooms for living, the halls, toilets and the areas surrounding the buildings.
9. When property is broken it has to be repaid for and restored in 8 days. Leaving on an external address cannot happen unless [damages] are repaid.
10. When aid is being distributed you have to line up with talons, badges, and green cards in your hands. If any of these documents is missing, no aid is given to the offender.
11. During visiting delegations, you have to smile and speak quietly, no yelling and shouting.
12. Going on an external address happens only between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
13. When exiting the center you have to leave your badge behind and to show your green card. Time for visiting the city of Harmanli is between 9 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. (later returns are possible only with the allowance of the accommodation staff after the submission of application).
14. Everyone is obliged to load and unload goods, aid packages and other working activities given by the center's administration. Nobody has the right to refuse.
15. Alcohol consumption is forbidden. Smoking is allowed at the designated areas.
16. Anyone who has left Harmanli will be checked by the Police for compliance with the order and carrying green cards. Violators will be arrested by the police for up to 3 days.
17. You have to be patient in receiving status. The impatient ones may not receive status if they break relations with the administration.
18. Those who do not wear badges will not be serviced by the administration and will receive status at a later point.
19. Address in the center of Harmanli will be given only to those who do not make any troubles, those who are disciplined, follow the regulations, rules, and the laws of Republic of Bulgaria.
20. It is forbidden to throw trash anywhere but in the containers.
21. The organization of revolts will be judged according to Bulgarian laws. Ignorance of the rules does not exempt you from criminal liability.

APPENDIX 2



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
HELLENIC REPUBLIC
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΛΙΤΗ
MINISTRY OF CITIZEN PROTECTION
ΑΡΧΗΓΕΙΟ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑΣ
HEADQUARTERS OF HELLENIC POLICE
ΚΛΑΔΟΣ ΑΛΛΟΔΑΠΩΝ & ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑΣ ΣΥΝΟΡΩΝ
Α.Τ. ΚΗΠΩΝ ΈΒΡΟΥ
Τηλ. 0030 25550 31224 – FAX 25550 31100
ΑΡ. ΠΡΩΤ. : **140184**



- ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ -
- EUROPEAN UNION -

ΑΡΝΗΣΗ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ ΣΤΑ ΣΥΝΟΡΑ
REFUSAL OF ENTRY AT THE BORDER

Την (On) **31/05/2014**, ώρα (at time) **18:15'** στο συνοριακό σημείο διέλευσης (at the border point) **ΚΗΠΩΝ ΈΒΡΟΥ (KIPI-ΕΒΡΟΣ)** ενώπιον ημών των υπογεγραμμένων (We, the undersigned,) **1) Ανθ/μου ΔΑΡΓΙΝΙΔΗ Χριστόδουλου, 2) Αρχ/κα ΣΑΚΑΛΑΚΗ Γεωργίου** παρουσιάστηκε ενώπιον μας (have before us):

Επώνυμο (Surname) _____ όνομα (name) _____, ημερομηνία γεννήσεως (date of birth) _____
τόπος γεννήσεως (place of birth) _____, φύλο (sex) **Γ** υπηκοότητα (Nationality) **Συριακή** κάτοικος (Resident in) **Συρίας**, κάτοχος του δελτίου ταυτότητας/διαβατηρίου (type of identity document/passport) Διαβατηρίου Επικουρικής Προστασίας (Passport of Subsidiary Protection Beneficiary) υπ' αριθ. (number) _____ εκδύσα Αρχή (issued in) **Αρχές Βουλγαρίας** ημερομηνία έκδοσης (on) _____ -2014 λήξεως ισχύος την **08-11-2016**, κάτοχος της θεώρησης αριθμ. (visa number) - τύπος (type) - που χορηγήθηκε από - και ισχύει από (valid from) - έως (until) - για μια περίοδο διάρκειας (for a period of) **30 ημερών** για τους ακόλουθους λόγους (days on the following grounds):(-)

Προερχόμενος από (Coming from) **ΤΟΥΡΚΙΑ**, μέσω (by means of) **οδικώς**, ο οποίος οποία πληροφορήθηκε ότι ελήφθη για το άτομο του απόφαση άρνησης εισόδου στη χώρα (he is hereby informed that he is refused entry into the country) , **δυνάμει (pursuant to) αρθρ. 13 του Κ.Σ.Σ.** , για τους ακόλουθους λόγους (for the following reasons):

<input type="checkbox"/>	(A) Δεν διαθέτει έγκυρο /α ταξιδιωτικό /α έγγραφο /α (A) Has not valid travel document / s
<input type="checkbox"/>	(B) Παρουσίασε πλαστό /α , πλαστογραφημένο /α ή παραποιημένο /α ταξιδιωτικό /α έγγραφο /α (B) Has a false / counterfeit / forged travel document
<input type="checkbox"/>	(Γ) Δεν διαθέτει έγκυρη θεώρηση ή τίτλο διαμονής (C) Has not valid visa or residence permit
<input type="checkbox"/>	(Δ) Παρουσίασε πλαστή , πλαστογραφημένη ή παραποιημένη θεώρηση ή τίτλο διαμονής (D) Has a false / counterfeit / forged visa or residence permit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(E) Δεν διαθέτει τα απαραίτητα αποδεικτικά έγγραφα σχετικά με τον σκοπό και τους όρους διαμονής. Δεν παρασχέθηκε (-αν) το (τα) ακόλουθο (-α) έγγραφο (-α):.....
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(E) Has no appropriate documentation justifying the purpose and conditions of stay The following document (s) could not be provided

(ΣΤ) Έχει παραμείνει ήδη επί 90 ημέρες εντός περιόδου 180 ημερών στην επικράτεια των κρατών μελών της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης .
(F) Has already stayed for 90 days during a 180 days period on the territory of The Member States of the European Union.

(Ζ) Δεν διαθέτει επαρκή μέσα διαβίωσης σε σχέση με τη διάρκεια και τον τρόπο διαμονής του/της , καθώς και για την επιστροφή του/της στη χώρα προέλευσης ή διέλευσης .
(G) Does not have sufficient means of subsistence in relation to the period and form of Stay, or the means to return to the country of origin or transit .

(Η) Έχει καταχωρηθεί ως ανεπιθύμητος /η
στο SIS
στο εθνικό μητρώο
(H) Is a person for whom an alert has been issued for the purposes of refusing entry
in the SIS
in the national register

(Θ) Θεωρείται άτομο επικίνδυνο για τη δημόσια τάξη και ασφάλεια , την εσωτερική ασφάλεια ή τη δημόσια υγεία ή τις διεθνείς σχέσεις ενός ή περισσότερων από τα κράτη μέλη της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης (Σύμφωνα με το Ν. 2910/2001 και Ν. 2514/1997) .
(I) Is considered to be a threat to public order, internal security, public health or the international relations of one or more of the Members of European Union (According to the Law 2910/2001 and 2514/1997).

Παρατηρήσεις :

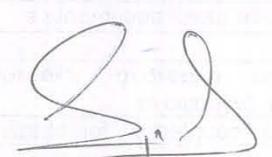
Ο/Η ενδιαφερόμενος /η μπορεί να υποβάλει προσφυγή κατά της απόφασης άρνησης εισόδου , σύμφωνα με το εθνικό δίκαιο στον Διοικητή της Υπηρεσίας ή στα διοικητικά δικαστήρια (τηλ. Δικηγορικού Συλλόγου Αλεξανδρούπολης 25510- 26712) . Στον /στην ενδιαφερόμενο /η χορηγείται αντίγραφο της παρούσας πράξης (Σύμφωνα με το Ν.2690/1999 και το Ν.2721/1999) .

The person concerned may appeal against to decision to refuse entry at the chief of the service or at an administrative court as provided for in national law (tel. number of lawyers association in Alexandroupolis 25510-26712) . The person concerned receives a copy of this document (According to the Law N.2690/1999 and N.2721/1999).

Ο Ενδιαφερόμενος
Person concerned

Οι αρμόδιοι για τον έλεγχο υπάλληλοι
Officers responsible for checks

--

1.	
2.	