

Life of Migrant Balkan Route

Selected Poems From a Migrant's Diary of Resistance

About the author

After a 50km ride between the towns of Bihać and Velika Kladuša, our car arrived at the location where we were due to meet up with A. We parked just off the road, nearer to Kladuša than to Bihać, and stepped out in front of "Royal". The humble roadside café-restaurant had nothing really royal about it, thank goodness, but what it did have, was an unusually warm feel to it, most likely due to the yellow lights reflecting off the peach-tinted interior walls, decorated with the Marshal's portrait-calendar hanged right next to the mounted TV. We, however, decided to sit outside. Soon after A. appeared from the embrace of a rather chilly twilight, coming down at the road. He arrived by foot from Miral - the migrant camp located about ten minutes walking distance from

Royal. As we planted ourselves at the wooden tables, we started a conversation with one of the wisest and most courageous people I have ever met. A. is his pseudonym. And his story? All we know is he is born in 1996 in Cameroon, as a Cameroonian citizen belonging to the Anglophone community. The human rights breaches committed by the Cameroonian francophone-dominated government are well-documented: kidnapping, torture, extrajudicial killings, and burning of whole villages. As a persecuted activist in his home country, A. had to leave and embark on a dangerous journey to Europe, arriving in Slovenia in 2019, accompanied by a Kurdish friend.

Between January 2018 and October 2021, the Slovenian police carried out 29,043 extraditions to the Croatian police, ignoring most asylum requests. The Croatian police persistently and violently pushes people back to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and this is precisely what happened to A. upon encountering both police forces. A. then took the state of Slovenia to court with the help of good friends from a local Slovenian activist group, Infokolpa. Over the several years that followed, as he waited for the outcome of

ts on the to Europe

Photos:
unknown/
untraceable

Poems:
A. Nana

Redactor:
Saša Hajzler

the court case, he started writing a diary. He also collected testimonies and stories from other migrants in camp Miral, publishing them along with his thoughts as true *poetry of resistance* on his social-media blog, titled “Life of migrants on the Balkan road to Europe”.¹ The selection of poems that follows speaks for itself. It is up to the reader to read between the lines, and form his or her own impression of the situation and the agency of migrants along the route. The words that follow are words of resistance and freedom. The words belong to A., but the voice is of all migrants.

About the photographs

The photos are visual testimonies taken somewhere between the Greek islands, the Macedonian woodlands, Serbian roads, the camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the forests and rivers in Croatia and Slovenia, between 2015 and 2021. Other than that, the photos are not anchored to a specific time and place, and are thus timeless and placeless, freely circulating among migrant and activist communities. Many such visual testimonies are lost along the way, as people lose their phones in the forests, or they are stolen by the police along with their other belongings.

Endnotes

- 1 Link to the blog: facebook.com/Life-of-migrants-on-the-Balkan-road-to-Europe-109971613811154

Friday, December 6, 2019 at 2:20 AM

It's been a year and some months now
Far, far from everyone else and everything I love
I set off on a trip to an unknown place
With dreams I dreamed of reaching

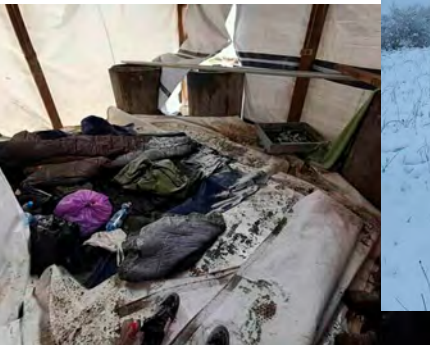
Europe,
It was something I could nearly touch
It was at my reach

But it's a year and a half now
I am living in the streets
I have been forced to move to the Croatian borders
When I realized my dreams had been broken

With the passing of time
With every beating
Sleepless night
And escaping through many forests
Little by little they have taken away my dreams
And also – my life

Sunday, January 12, 2020 at 2:38 PM

We left home in search for a better life
In a continent
(Europe)
Where we know human rights
(And humanity)
Are performed and everyone
(Migrants)
Is accepted by society
But on getting here
After passing days
(And nights)
On the oceans and forests



Thursday, December 19, 2019 at 7:01 PM

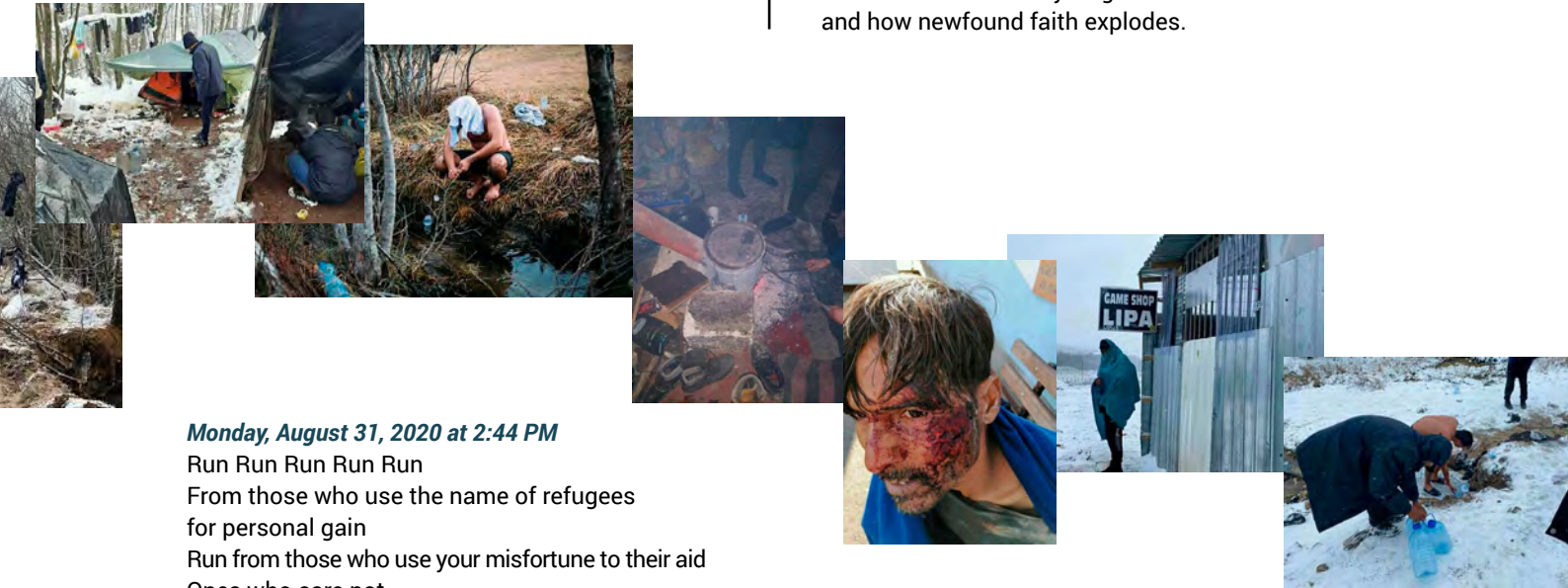
It's been 8 months now since we left our families
back at home with dreams of making or giving
them a better life but now those dreams have
been killed 4 in number but just 2 are left. What a
world we live in.

They received us
(With beatings)
And the destruction of our belongings
So we ask this:
Is it true that human rights exist in Europe
(If yes where are they)
Is it true that the act of humanity
is performed in Europe
If yes why are we
(Migrants)
Not accepted by society

Why will there be posts in public places like
NO ENTRANCE FOR MIGRANTS
Are those rights and the act of humanity
just in books
For us to read?

Wednesday, December 23, 2020 at 4:06 PM

We don't define ourselves
by the many roadblocks on our path.
We define ourselves by the courage
we have found to forge new roads.
We do not define ourselves
by disappointments and wrath
We define ourselves by forgiveness
and how newfound faith explodes.



Monday, August 31, 2020 at 2:44 PM

Run Run Run Run Run
From those who use the name of refugees
for personal gain
Run from those who use your misfortune to their aid
Ones who care not
Who use you to show power
Who want you to see them as God
Who are happy when you sob
Run run from those who think
your life is in their hands
Who in brutalizing find happiness
Run run from those who use you
for their political upper hand
Who use the name of refugees
for their personal political agenda and plan
I say run run run from those
Who are happy to see division among humans
Get up and run
Keep up running until you go far
From those who know nothing
About what you're going through
I say run – as far and fast as you can run

We do not define ourselves
By how many times we have been knocked down
Those aren't the signs
We define ourselves by how many times
we have struggled to stand on our feet, inspired
We are not our pain
We are not our past
We are that which emerged from fire

Thursday, January 7, 2021 at 12:14 PM

Nobody can teach us (migrants) who we are
But you can describe parts of us
As for who we are or what we want, what is far
That's something we have to find out
Thus no matter the brutalizing, rejection or killing
You cannot teach or find out who we are
Or where we are going
Nor where we are coming from
To my brothers and sisters
We should stand strong
For very soon the moon
Will give way for the dawn.

The more asking myself all of these questions
And with a loud voice which scared the birds away
I shouted
I won't give up!
No matter how hard they try to break me
Let the spirit of positivity keep growing



Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at 1:58 PM

Getting to walking through nature today
I was welcomed with a sweet melody
By birds who sang that melody of freedom
Getting to listening to this sweet, sweet melody
It went right deep into my soul, made me shed tears
Why shedding tears?
I began to ask myself many questions like
When are migrants going to be free
When are we going to be free from rejection
When from dehumanization
When are they going to stop killing us
When are they going to accept us
Just like any other human
Oh, how I shed those tears

Monday, August 16, 2021 at 5:31 PM

A letter from a migrant to himself
Dear me
I know it's really, really hard
You're probably staring at yourself now
Crying your eyes out
This is not what I imagined it to be!
I'm here to tell you, you're doing it for the past me
Preparing for a better future we
Have faith in yourself and remember
When you took your first step
It's some of the best memories
you will have ever kept
It will be worth it
Hang in there and make a big difference
Between your childhood self
And your present significance
Must go through darkness
To appreciate the light which reflects
We love you

Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at 10:34 PM

These last days many say am unhappy but I'm not
I just appreciate silences
In a world which repeatedly violates human rights
They use humans for their political purposes
and enriching themselves
Sacrificing innocent souls
I just appreciate silences
In a world that derives joy from the pains of others
I just appreciate silences
In a world that never stops talking

Thursday, October 7, 2021 at 1:16 PM

European borders
The best place for anyone
Heartless and wicked
To see how brutality
Dehumanization
And violation of human rights
Are carried out
One should visit the European borders
Throughout
Many say the European union stands for justice
But I will say No
It stands for violence



Sunday, October 3, 2021 at 6:02 PM

Oh the Balkans
What a killer of dreams
And sweet hospitality
Oh Balkans
Why you let yourself become a modern prison
And migrant cemetery
Oh gods of the Balkans
We plead for your mercy
And permission to go through
Wickedness of mankind made us find ourselves here
May you Have mercy on us poor migrants

Closing its eyes to what's happening
So I ask
When will it come to an ending
When will they hold guilty
All those violating the law
Ooh – I forgot
How can someone who's guilty as guilty
Accuse the guilty of being guilty