



MIGRANT CRISIS IN MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Macedonia due to its geo-strategic position is a transiting route for the illegal migrants, who driven by safety and economical reasons are making efforts from the countries of the Middle East and Africa to immigrate to some of the Western European countries. In the months of July and August 2015 there was a drastic increase of the number of migrants entering and transiting through our country, which increased the concerns in terms of safety and humanitarian treatment. The large influx of migrants caused more frequent disruption of public peace and order and deterioration of the safety situation in the populated areas, mostly on the southern border. In order to cope with the newly arisen state-of-play, the Government in August of 2015 declared a state of emergency on the southern and northern border due to increased proportion of entrance and transiting of migrants through the territory of Macedonia. In this paper, the author shall elaborate on the general aspects of refugee crisis, as seen from the aspect of acting of police in all stages of coping with the state of emergency, starting from monitoring the situation, collection of data, grading and appraisal of data, taking precautionary activities, early warning, management and cooperation and coordination of the Police with the remaining Subjects in the crisis management system.

Key words:

State of emergency; Coordination; Cooperation; Migrants.

INTRODUCTION

For successful dealing with crisis situation, it is necessary to engage all entities in the Crisis Management System. The engagement of the entities in the Crisis Management System involves taking measures and activities aimed at monitoring the situation, collecting data, assessing and evaluating data, undertaking preventive activities, early warning and dealing with the already occurred crisis situation. For the successful implementation of these activities, the cooperation and effective coordination between the Police and other entities in the Crisis Management System is extremely important.

Due to its geostrategic position, Macedonia is a transit route for illegal migrants from the countries of the Middle East and Africa who are attempting to leave in some of the Western European countries, motivated of security and economic reasons. Migrants,

trying to reach the desired destination, face a variety of problems, both from a security and from a humanitarian point of view.

But also, the countries through which the migrants transit, have the same challenges. From one hand, to provide a controlled entry into the territory of the state and to protect the rights of migrants in accordance with international agreements, and on the other hand, to protect citizens' property and provide favorable public order and peace in the settlements where migrants pass. Since September 2014, the number of migrants entering the country's territory on a daily basis has started to rise sharply, and in the months of July and August 2015 it culminated, and this trend of increased numbers of migrants continued in the first months of 2016. With the increased number of migrants entering the territory of the country, the problems have increased both in security and humanitarian character.

During this period, a frequent violation of public order and peace was noted, which led to a worsening of the security situation in the populated areas of the southern border. Due to the limited capacities of the institutions involved, the state faced a situation where it could hardly be adequately responded, and therefore on 19 August 2015, the Government adopted a Decision declaring a crisis situation on the territory of the southern and northern state borders, due to increased volume of entry and transit of migrants.

COORDINATION AND COOPERATION OF ENTITIES IN THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Coordination as a term denotes the adjustment of the action of two or more participants in a process, that is, the coordination and direction of the interaction between the elements of a system in order to achieve the set or adopted goals (Stevanovic, 2003: 202). One of the important prerequisites for maintaining an effective border security system is continuous cooperation both with domestic authorities as well as with foreign border services and international organizations and institutions that handle the issue of border management.

In order to successfully address the migrant crisis, the Ministry of Interior in coordination with the other entities in the Crisis Management System, a number of coordinated measures and activities were undertaken, for which implementation it was necessary to engage the overall human resources and material and technical means of the Crisis Management System. Within these activities, Working Group at the ministerial level and the Operative Body for dealing with an increased number of migrants were formed, and in accordance with the Law on Crisis Management, the Headquarter in the Crisis Management Center, the Assessment Group and Steering Committee were activated. Taking into consideration that during 2015 many migrants transited our country, the cooperation and coordinated actions of the police with other entities in the Crisis Management System is of invaluable knowledge and greatly



affects the success in organizing the smooth and safe flow of migrants across the country.

Measures and activities for dealing with the crisis situation

The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the other entities in the Crisis Management System, continuously undertakes a number of measures and activities in the area of monitoring the security situation, collecting data and information, and assessing and evaluating them. For the successful management of the crisis situation, the following measures and activities were undertaken: 1. Amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, 2. Announce of the Crisis Situation, 3. Selective Approach in Allowing Migrants to Pass, 4. Limitation of the migration flow, 5. Determination of the final destination of migrants, 6. Entry and transit of the migrants coming from only endangered areas, 7. Unified registration form for migrants and 8. Inclusion of foreign police services.

1. Amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection. On June 18, 2015, amendments were introduced enabling migrants legal and organized transit through the state by issuing a confirmation of the expressed intention for recognizing the right to asylum, according with within 72 hours they should apply for recognition of the right to asylum or leave the country. According to this measure, two temporary transit centers on the southern border "Vinojug" in Gevgelija and on the northern border "Tabanovce" in Kumanovo with a total capacity of 2,000 seats have been opened for registration and provision of humanitarian and medical assistance to migrants. This measure contributed to reducing the activity of criminal groups and individuals who committed criminal acts "smuggling of migrants".

2. Announce of the crisis situation. According to the estimates and the enormously increased inflow of migrants to entry and transit through the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, on August 19, 2015, a Decision was adopted to declare a crisis situation on the territory of the southern and northern state borders. For that purpose, the Crisis Management System (CMS) has been activated, whose representatives from different institutions with their own competencies participat. The CMS was comprised of: Steering Committee, Assessment Group and Headquarter. In addition to the resources of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in dealing with the migration crisis, this measure enabled the use of the resources of other state institutions, primarily the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, the Directorate for Protection and Rescue, etc.

3. Selective Approach in Allowing Migrants to Pass. In addition to the existing measures arising from the key national decisions, additional measures were immediately implemented that resulted from the decisions and policies of the other countries on the so-called "Western Balkan Route". After receiving a notification from the Republic of Croatia and Serbia that migrants who do not come from countries

affected by armed conflict will not be admitted to their countries, starting on November 19, 2015, only the migrants from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq were allowed to pass. The measure of the selective approach on one hand has influenced the reduction of the number of migrants who transit through the country, but on the other hand it initiated a) an increase in illegal crossings at the southern border of persons who were not allowed entry and, b) re-activation of individuals and criminal groups for their smuggling through the territory of Macedonia.

4. *Limitation of migration flow.* After receiving notifications from the working meetings with representatives of Serbia and Greece, from January 11, 2016, the measure - restricting the migration flow and the preparation of the List of Migrants, the flow of migrants was limited up to 3,000 people per day. The preparation of the List of Migrants was temporarily postponed with the agreement with Serbia until the transit of migrants started again by trains to the camp in Presevo, Serbia. In the period from January 11 to February 23, 2016, throughout our country passed almost half of the maximum allowed daily quota or about 1,500 migrants.

5. *Determination of the final destination of migrants.* Upon notification by the Republic of Serbia that migrants who do not have a clearly stated final destination will not be allowed to enter Serbia, starting from January 21, 2016, only migrants from countries of military conflicts, and those who clearly indicated Germany or Austria as ultimate destination in their registration certificates were allowed to pass.

6. *Entry and transit of migrants coming only from endangered areas.* The measures implemented from February 19, 2016, arise from the last meeting of the Austrian, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Serbian Police directors on February 18, 2016 year in Zagreb, Croatia. The measures have been taken in order to improve the cooperation and management of the migration movements, and referred to the fact that entry into Macedonia and transit along the route to the final destination will be allowed only to migrants coming from endangered areas and to those who need international protection. As such areas were defined Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the migrants, besides having a registration document issued by the Greek authorities, had to prove their citizenship during the interview by attaching travel documents or other documents, knowledge of the language of the country they represented etc.

7. *Unified registration form for migrants.* For the purpose of standardizing the registration of migrants from February 19, 2016, Macedonia started with issuing unified registration forms to migrants at the entrance, after previously made checks and profiling, and then the other police authorities of the states along the route only put their seal on the template.

8. *Involving foreign police services.* In dealing with migration challenges at the Macedonian-Greek border, the contribution of the foreign police services participating in joint border operations, which started on December 21, 2015, was significant.



ILLEGAL ENTRY INTO MACEDONIA

As a result of the monitoring of the situation with the illegal entry of migrants in the country, the Police came to the conclusion that illegal crossings are present at the state border with all neighboring countries, and as critical sites used for illegal crossings on the state border with Bulgaria were located border crossing points "Novo Selo", "Delchevo" and "Deve Bair". On the southern state border with Greece, the most frequent illegal crossings were registered in the surroundings and the city of Gevgelija, but also at Demir Kapija, Negotino, Gradsko, from the section from Udovo to the Bogorodica border crossing, Valandovo Hill, village of Pirawa and other places.

On the northern state border with the Republic of Serbia and Kosovo, the most frequently used routes for illegal crossing of the state border were in the area of Kriva Palanka, Pelince, Sopot near the village of Asane, Belanovce near the village of Stancic, Tanushevci, Blace, Rogachevo, Popova Shapka and Dolno Blace near the border crossing. On the western state border with Albania the most numerous were illegal crossings around the border crossing Kafasan, the area of Frangovo and Blato.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings mentioned above, we can conclude that because of its geostrategic position Macedonia is a transit route for illegal migrants from the countries of the Middle East and Africa who are trying to leave in the Western European countries. On this route, migrants and security services face a variety of problems, both from a security and from a humanitarian point of view. For successful dealing with the problems, coordinated performance and capacity building of all entities in the Crisis Management System is needed.

In particular, this should be tailored towards increasing the human capacities of the security services, their readiness and promptness to respond, as well as their equipping with modern material technical means. The Ministry of Interior and other entities in the Crisis Management System require continuous undertaking of measures and activities in the area of monitoring the security situation, collection of data and information, and their assessment. In cases when at the entrance of the state public order and peace was disturbed by migrants, the Police and Army of Macedonia professionally responded to all challenges, without violation of human rights, and succeeded to establish public order and peace. During the day-to-day monitoring of the security situation, the Police successfully detected illegal crossings on the state border with all neighboring countries, and had taken appropriate measures.

Finally, we can conclude that the cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other entities in the Crisis Management System in dealing with the crisis situation is of particular importance for successful dealing with the crisis

situation. Good coordination achieved through intensive communication between all the relevant bodies and agencies, primarily between the Ministry of Interior and the entities within the Crisis Management System is a guarantee for successful handling of the crisis situation.

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