Human Rights Watch publishes report on pushbacks at Croatian-Bosnian border, police abuses and denial of access

On 24 November 2026, Human Rights Watch published the report "Doing Europe's Dirty Work: Ongoing Violent Pushbacks of Migrants from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina", based on interviews with 87 third-country nationals, refugees and asylum seekers, including 7 unaccompanied children. The report documents alleged pushbacks by the Croatian police, lack of access to the asylum procedure, and police abuses, including the confiscation of money and belongings, destruction of phones and other property, and detention in overcrowded container-like cells without adequate food and water at a remote location matching the description of the Screening and Border Procedure site in Dugi Dol.

The report also includes the response of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior. The ministry noted that border enforcement is carried out by police officers trained in the protection of fundamental rights, including access to the international protection system and the treatment of vulnerable persons. It further stated that all third-country nationals undergo a screening procedure upon entry, are provided with information in a language they understand, are guaranteed access to asylum procedures and free legal aid, and are protected by the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Regarding safeguards against ill treatment by police officers, the Ministry indicated that police officers may legally use force as prescribed by law. It emphasised that excessive use of force and the unlawful confiscation of property are not tolerated and are investigated and sanctioned through existing internal oversight mechanisms. The Ministry noted that, between 2020 and 2025, 25 disciplinary proceedings were initiated against police officers in connection with their treatment of migrants, of whom 7 were sanctioned. One complaint currently under investigation was recorded in 2026.

Lastly, the ,ministry added that the external border is monitored and that the procurement of body-worn cameras will be considered, although this is not a legal requirement. It further observed that police conduct at the border is monitored by the Office of the Ombudsman, and that amendments to the Law on Foreigners adopted in June 2026 require the establishment of an independent

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monitoring mechanism under the Office for Human Rights and National Minority Rights. The relevant regulations were being drafted at the time of the report.

Source(s)

- Human Rights Watch (24 November, 2026), [Croatia: Border Pushbacks of Adults, Children Violate Rights], https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/11/24/croatia-border-pushbacks-of-adults-children-violate-rights

Related development(s)
Save the Children published a Spotlight document on pushbacks from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina
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