

Information bulletin

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Population movement

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A. Situation analysis

Description of the situation

Since 2011, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been a crossroad for migrants, and in the past 10 months the number of migrants, particularly those from Syria, has been rising. According to the statistical data¹ in the period between January 2015 and May 2015, over 2,300 migrants transited through the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and about 500 persons are sheltered at the reception centre located in the capital city of Skopje as undocumented migrants where they usually stay from one to six months.

On the basis of the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that the migrants transiting through the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would look for temporary shelter in the villages scattered around the cities of Gevgelija and Valandovo close to the border with Greece, and then they walk along the railroad line Gevgelija – Veles towards the villages Lojane, Vaksince and other local villages in Kumanovo area city close to the border with Serbia, from where they try to continue their trip towards the EU countries. Only one family has officially requested a residence permit in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia so far. In the villages, migrants usually reside in deserted houses, without any elementary conditions for normal life, or they rent rooms for a short period of time in the homes of the local population, and after that they continue their trip towards the EU countries. Having in mind that these people travel mainly at night on a hardly passable terrain, tired and starving, 27 persons lost their lives on the railroad tracks in train accidents during the last several months.



Red Cross mobile team patrolling the Skopje – Veles route.
Photo: The Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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Activities of the Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Besides the Ministry of Interior, the Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and UNHCR are the main agencies that work on the provision of assistance for this vulnerable target group, which is mainly comprised of families with many children, small babies and in many cases families with self-supporting single parents. The Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and UNHCR have signed a cooperation agreement between the two organizations for the provision of services for the improvement of the quality of life of the migrants during their stay in the country or during their transiting. Health care services are also available for the migrants at the premises of the reception centre.

¹ Official statistics of the Ministry of Interior.



Information board along the railroad containing information on potential dangers. Photo: The Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Under this agreement, the Red Cross is assisting both those persons who are sheltered in the reception centre and the migrants who are transiting through the country. The Red Cross provides primary health care for reducing the vulnerability of the migrants who are sheltered in the reception centre.

A Red Cross doctor who speaks Arabic provides the migrants in the centre with primary health care seven days a week. In the framework of this activity, the Red Cross supports these people with the required medicaments and other medical aids. Also the Red Cross enables access for this group of people to local public health care institutions. Once a week, a pediatrician comes to the centre to inspect the health condition of the children.

On a monthly basis, they are provided with food, clothes, non-food items (kitchen sets, mattresses, blankets, diapers) toys for children, milk for infants, and supplementary food for this vulnerable category of persons or children with specific health conditions according to the assessment of the reception centre and the needs of the migrants.

Table 1 - Statistical data January/May 2015 for persons who received assistance in food and medicaments

	January	February	March	April	May
Males over the age of 18	150	243	336	282	481
Females over the age of 18	117	158	155	131	163
Males below the age of 18	25	62	53	61	78
Females below the age of 18	13	31	32	36	49
Pregnant women	2	7	/	/	1
Infants	5	2	7	5	9
Total	312	503	583	515	781

The Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia developed information brochures in Arabic that are available to the migrants, and the brochure contains information on the available health care and social services, possibilities to access to legal protection and asylum as well as details on further institutions that provide relevant support to them. These brochures are distributed through the local Red Cross branches in Veles, Valandovo and Gevgelija.

The activities are implemented by the Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with the close involvement of five Red Cross branches (Skopje, Veles, Kumanovo, Gevgelija and Valandovo), with the support of 20 Red Cross staff and 30 volunteers.

Among those activities, the Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia conducted a field assessment for appraising the future involvement of the Red Cross in the process of assistance to migrants that are transiting through Macedonia. Meetings were organized with the local Red Cross branches (RC Gevgelija, RC Veles). Also the Red Cross has conducted a meeting with three local NGO's that started some activities for the support of migrants that are transiting through the cities of Gevgelija, Negotino, Veles, Skopje and Kumanovo. A similar meeting was organized with the UNHCR office in Skopje.

In cooperation with, and with financial support of, UNHCR, the Red Cross of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia formed one mobile team (driver, doctor and nurse) that started the activities on June 1, 2015. The pilot phase of the mobile team will last for two months and will undertake patrols on the route Skopje – Veles. The team has a motor vehicle, a medical bag with first aid medicaments and dressings, and will provide potable water and canned food to the transiting migrants.

Contact information

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.