

transbalkanska solidarnost

transbalkan solidarity

Call to Action: SOAPS FOR IOM

April 29 - 30, 2020

Transbalkan Solidarity invites you to participate in a 48-hour soap-bombing protest campaign directed at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which manages camps for the confinement of people on the move in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Why do we need to take action?

Conditions in the camps run by IOM in BiH during the COVID-19 pandemic resemble those in concentration camps:

- violence against people in the camps is on the rise,
- food is constantly insufficient and not nutritious enough while even more reduced and worse in quality,
- hygienic conditions are concerning,
- healthcare remains at a bare minimum,
- people are denied the freedom to move and leave the camps for an indefinite period.

Transbalkan Solidarity contends that:

- Soap is not a luxury!
- Trash is not food!
- A camp is not a living space!
- A tent is not a house!

How to participate in the campaign?

- **send a soap** (photo attached) to IOM at
missionsarajevo@iom.int
PVANDERAUWERAERT@iom.int

If you are concerned about your privacy, open a new email address.

- **share a soap** (photo attached) on your social media with hashtags [#thissoapisforiom](#), [#soapbombing](#), [#protestcampagin](#), [#transbalkansolidarity](#), [#iom](#)
- **distribute** this call to action among your comrades and in your community
- send and/or share a soap anytime between **April 29 - 30, 2020**

Take action now! Send a soap of hope!

Transbalkan Solidarity

Email: reakcijananakovanjicekic@gmail.com

Web: <https://transbalkanskasolidarnost.home.blog/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/transbalkanskasolidarnost/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TSolidarnost>

Why do we organize this protest campaign?

Since the end of the war in 1995, the international community (IC) has had a strong presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and has been in many cases substituting the dysfunctional state institutions. Having a broad mandate, the members of the IC have been doing all to remain in power as long as possible in BiH mainly in order to retain their well-paid jobs while living in the middle of Europe.

In such a way, with a murky mandate, in recent years, the International Organization for Migrations (IOM) has dealt with issues as broad as reparations, conflict-related sexual violence, and recently the prevention of terrorism. In such a way they positioned themselves as one of the main donors to a significant number of NGOs and independent media outlets, consequently conditioning the work and reducing the critical power of civil society.

With the increase of people on the move in BiH, the IOM “suddenly” recognized the “applicability” of their mandate to the situation. Within several months, they successfully pushed aside the disinterested state (claiming corruption within the state institutions), and the UNHCR mission in BiH (claiming the new situation is not a refugee issue but rather a migration one), and became the main player to which the EU donated money. The amount currently stands at around 40 million

EUR received in the last two years. The EU saw IOM as their adequate partner to support their quest to use BiH as the second European filter, after Greece, at the EU borders.

By the summer of 2018, it became clear that thousands of people cannot sleep in the streets of BiH, and be solely taken care of by the poverty-stricken local people and random international volunteers who came to provide humanitarian assistance. So, IOM took upon itself to organize the “temporary accommodation centers”. Rather than cooperating with the state, the IOM rented spaces from the private owners, many of whom have shady pasts. In addition to renting an abandoned hotel, with no running drinking water, where they placed some “lucky” families, the IOM rented several abandoned buildings, some even as bad as empty factory halls. Conditions there have never intended to be livable and dignified. People of all ages are crammed together in the halls with hundreds of beds in the same space. Unaccompanied minors have not been receiving proper care or any education. Hygienic conditions have never been up to the dignifying standards - with very limited access to running water and hot water. Food has never been sufficient. Health care, including psychological care, is reduced to a bare minimum. There is no proper protection within the camps; rather people are exposed to all types of violence, trafficking, and illegal drugs.

From the very beginning, these concentration camps have been abusive and limiting, never intended to be spaces where people could stay longer and live in dignity. These camps mirror the politics of justification of the negligence and mistreatment of people on the move. In addition to employing many *ad hoc* trained staff, IOM hired private security firms, as well as some local and international organizations that have been paid through the EU funds.

From the beginning of the engagement of the private security firms, there were valid and recorded reports of violence by the security guards against the people in the camps. Outside of the camps, IOM stays far away from the people who live on the streets. On numerous occasions, IOM refused accepting people who are by the definition vulnerable, including unaccompanied minors, women with children and LGBT population, to the camps, claiming lack of capacity, at even one person looking for shelter. Moreover, IOM refuses to, at least publicly, engage in condemning pushbacks and violence against people on the borders with Croatia and Slovenia. Furthermore, IOM refuses to, at least publicly, condemn the actions of racial profiling by the different administrative authorities within Bosnia, or the hate speech and lies proclaimed by Bosnian politicians aimed at increasing racism within Bosnia. The only thing the IOM engages with, in corroboration with the different state institutions, is supporting the worrying militarization of the police.

With the spread of the COVID-19, the camps confining people resemble concentration camps even more. The authorities of BiH ordered the prohibition of movement for the people on the move. So IOM agreed to fully lockdown people in all the camps and limit their freedom of movement to an indefinite period. Reports of violence against people in the camps by security guards and IOM staff has been increasing. Also, the insufficient food became even more reduced and worse in quality (please see the photos). In the past, at least people could go to the markets and buy additional food if they had money which is not possible anymore. The hygienic conditions never improved, they just got worse. People on the move felt more exposed to the pandemic as they were lined up to wait for food for several hours, as well as for the disinfection treatment in front of the factory hall once a week (please see the photos). Given the lockdown inside the camps and the fact that the staff is coming in daily while socially interacting outside of the camps, people on the move remain at high risk. The healthcare remains at a bare minimum with only paracetamol accessible to them.