

Recommendations:

The number of returnees per waiting room should be limited, in order to enable the escorts to keep track of the situation.

A country of destination should inform OMS and Frontex in advance about planned media coverage. An agreement about the terms of the media coverage, that respects the personal rights of escorts and returnees should be discussed in advance. Escorts and returnees should be informed in advance by the responsible Escort leaders.

Due to the large number of returnees, the second entrance into the plane should also be used for boarding.

Preparation:

On 31.07.2017 „Verein Menschenrechte Österreich“, as a national monitoring body, was informed by the ABT team that Frontex has selected [REDACTED] as a forced return monitor for NRO to Kosovo, Albania and Serbia organized by Germany on 22.08.2017 according to the offer made on 26.07.2017.

On 31.07.2017 [REDACTED] (FJRCC, Frontex) informed „Verein Menschenrechte Österreich“ about the flight schedule and contact persons in Germany for the forthcoming national return operation to Kosovo, Albania and Serbia.

Afterwards, the arrangements for the arrival and departure were discussed in direct contact between EL and Monitor. Flight and hotel bookings were made by OMS Germany.

Participants:

Other participants in the flight then returnees or escorts were:

- [REDACTED] Frontex Observer
- [REDACTED] Medic
- [REDACTED] Medic
- [REDACTED] Paramedic
- [REDACTED] Paramedic
- [REDACTED] Interpreter

Extent of the monitoring process:

[modus operandi]

18:35 - 19:14 Flight Tirana - Beograd

20:33 - 22:15 Flight Beograd – Berlin, Debriefing

Pre-Return Phase:

The pre-return phase was not covered by this monitoring.

Pre-Departure Phase:

The returnees were properly clothed. No health or psychological problems were reported, all returnees were fit to fly. A medic team was present.

While waiting at the terminal the returnees were adequately supplied with food and drinks. There was a possibility for everyone to visit the toilet and for the smokers to have a smoke. The security check was conducted [modus operandi] after the arrival of each returnee. Personal items and luggage were checked and labelled. The returnees were informed that personal items and luggage will be handed back after they arrive in their home countries.

Special care was provided for families with children. Baby food and swaddling clothes were disposable during the waiting time. Returnees were divided into three separate waiting areas, according to their destination. The waiting areas for returnees to Tirana and Prishtina were too small for the number of returnees. Finally, it was decided to bring some of these returnees to the waiting area assigned just for returnees to Belgrade, because the waiting area at the first floor was already overcrowded.

The briefing [modus operandi] with all escorts present. They were informed about the further process of the NRO.

Following incidents could be monitored:

Returnee got very upset, as he heard, that his money (about 800€) was kept by the Foreign Police for the costs of his forced return. He started to argue very loud with the escorts and representatives of the Foreign Police and threatened to resist boarding the plane, if he did not get any money. After longer discussion Escort Leader made him an offer either he gets 150 € or coercive measures would be applied. agreed with 150€ and was quiet for the rest of the waiting time.

At 12:05 Escort Leader was informed about problems with returnee was found on the floor in front of c where she resisted entering the house. had a protective helmet on her head and was handcuffed and her whole body was shaking. Her wrists were bandaged. She came with her 4 children, aged 17, 12, 5 and 3. The oldest son took care of the younger siblings. As was not able to stand up, she was carried into the children's play room, which was empty. She was sat in the chair, handcuffs were taken off. She refused any contact with the interpreter, saying that she wanted to die. According to a police officer her hands were already bandaged, when they came to pick her up. As it was the second attempt for her forced return and she didn't want to go voluntarily she was handcuffed and the protective helmet was put on her head. As repeated not to go back to Tirana, a bodycuff was used on her at 12:15.

The medic confirmed a normal health condition. was not able or willing to inform about any

kind of medicine she took or in which hospital was taken care of her.

Escort leader [REDACTED] asked her 17-year old son to speak with his mother, but she refused and sent her son away. At 12:40 the protective helmet was put off. V.G was all the time under supervision of 3 escorts, who took care of her. After some time, V.G asked an escort to look after her children, who were with other returnees in the waiting area. It was reported to her that the children were ok. V.G cried all the time and repeated that she didn't want to go to Tirana, but was not disruptive.

In-Flight Phase Berlin – Pristina, arrival in Pristina:

At 13:50, [REDACTED] was brought first to the aircraft and was seated at the rear part of the aircraft.

Next [REDACTED] was brought to the aircraft. She went to the aircraft on her own, supported by two escorts. Handcuffs were taken off after [REDACTED] was seated in the aircraft, as she asked for it and promised to cooperate. The bodycuff was taken off when the aircraft reached the cruising altitude. The oldest and youngest sons were sat in the row in front of her, with the other two children two rows in front of her.

All other returnees and the escorts were brought to the aircraft in two busses and the boarding was carried out without incidents.

During the flight Berlin – Pristina it came to a verbal incident with Family [REDACTED] and returnee Family [REDACTED] was upset, saying all the time that they couldn't take all the medicine for [REDACTED] from the flat. Returnee [REDACTED] started to shout and offended the escorts, V.X. also offended the interpreter. Escorts asked [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to calm down or otherwise to bring them to the rear part of the plane. Both calmed down.

The catering by the airline was sufficient. There was the possibility to visit the toilet.

After arriving in Pristina, the returnees to Kosovo, the escort Leader, interpreter and some escorts were transferred by bus to the airport building, where the returnees were taken over by representatives of the local authorities. The personal items were handed over from the German escorts to the Returnees.

In-Flight Phase Pristina-Tirana, arrival in Tirana:

The flight Pristina-Tirana went smoothly and without any special incidents. After arriving in Tirana, the Albanian authorities asked the Escort leader that the returnees should be handed over to representatives of the local authorities at the airport building. There was one photographer and camera man in front of the plane, taking pictures and filming the whole procedure. It was explained that the local TV station is making a story about forced return. EL or Frontex was not informed in advance. As far as it could be observed, the faces of the returnees were not filmed or photographed, officials from Germany however were recorded. The personal items couldn't be handed over from the German escorts to the returnees because the returnees were asked to go to another room. Personal items of the returnees were left with the Albanian authorities.

In-Flight Phase Tirana-Beograd, arrival in Beograd:

The flight Tirana-Beograd went smoothly and without any special incidents. The catering by the airline was sufficient. There was the possibility to visit the toilet. After arriving in Beograd, the returnees to Serbia were taken over by representatives of the local authorities and their personal items were handed over from the German escorts to the Returnees at the airport building.

Debriefing and Reporting:

The debriefing for the German escort team took place at around 20:10 in the airplane. The whole return operation was quiet and professional. No injuries or material damage were mentioned by the accompanying officers.

24.08.2017

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

