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ZA MIROVNE
STUDIJE

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ENAR staff member racially profiled and detained at Zagreb Airport

Europe's racist border policies a growing danger to racialised people: "One policeman told me that Croatia is a homogenous white society, that I am black and that gives them the right to ask for my documents"

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and Centre for Peace Studies Croatia vehemently condemn the systemic racial profiling and discriminatory practices at Europe's borders following a distressing incident involving Emmanuel Achiri, a human rights expert on Migration and Policing and dedicated ENAR staff member. The encounter, which took place at Zagreb Airport in Croatia on June 11, 2024, is a stark illustration of the pervasive racism that racialised individuals face daily in Europe.

Incident Overview

On the afternoon of June 11, Emmanuel Achiri, who has a PhD in International law and migration, was preparing to board a flight from Zagreb to Brussels. Despite adhering to all legal requirements, Emmanuel was subjected to an arbitrary stop and search by Croatian police officers without any explanation. Emmanuel, who is Black, was the only person in the vicinity singled out for this treatment, a clear act of racial profiling.

When Emmanuel calmly requested a reason for the stop, the police officers failed to provide one and escalated the situation by calling for backup. Emmanuel was subsequently surrounded by a group of officers who continued to demand his documents without offering any justification except for the colour of his skin, resorting to threats of violence when he stood firm in asserting his legal rights.

"One policeman told me that Croatia is a homogenous white society, that I am Black and that gives them the right to ask for my documents," shares Emmanuel on his interactions with the police.

Bystanders who witnessed the event recorded the incident and offered their support, confronting the officers about their discriminatory actions. Despite this, the police refused to address the racial profiling and instead detained Emmanuel in handcuffs, escorting him to a Frontex office within the airport. There, he was subjected to further indignities, including being searched and fined without cause.

ENAR's Response

"This experience has only strengthened my resolve to fight against the systemic racism that plagues our societies. No one should be made to feel like a criminal simply because of the

color of their skin. We must continue to speak out and take action against these injustices" concludes Emmanuel.

Lucija Mulalić from the Centre for Peace Studies, an ENAR Croatian member shares: "Emmanuel is an expert in the field of Migration and knew his rights. That fact didn't phase the police in their conduct at all. We are relieved that bystanders bore witness to Emmanuel in his time of need and helped ensure his safety. This incident could have ended very differently had it not been the case."

Kim Smouter, ENAR Executive Director adds that: "ENAR is appalled by this blatant display of racism and abuse of power by Croatian police. Emmanuel's experience is not an isolated incident but a regular part of how racialised people are treated in Europe, especially border countries. We equally thank our Croatian members, Centre for Peace Studies, for mobilizing so quickly to support our friend and colleague."

ENAR will support Centre for Peace Studies in legal actions seeking to establish police misconduct and discrimination, as well as challenging the misdemeanor case against Emmanuel and calls on the Croatian authorities to hold the police officers accountable for their conduct.

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Notes to editors:

- The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands against racism and discrimination and advocates equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debate
- Centre for Peace Studies (Croatian abbreviation: CMS; English abbreviation: CPS) is a civil society organisation that protects human rights and pursues social change based on the values of democracy, anti-fascism, nonviolence, peacebuilding, solidarity and equality using activism, education, research, advocacy and direct support. We work with communities, initiatives, organisations, media, institutions and individuals in Croatia and internationally.
- A full accounting of Emmanuel Achiri's experience can be found on LinkedIn at the following [link](#) or via the following [PDF link](#)
- Photograph of Emmanuel Achiri available [here](#)
- Photograph of Emmanuel Achiri handcuffed [here](#)