



## Fatmata's Killing and Legal Case

- Fatmata was shot and killed by North Macedonian border police on Wednesday, 19th of April 2023, close to the town of Gevgelija.
- The North Macedonian Ministry of Interior has admitted that the person who fired the shot was a police officer but claims it was a result of a scuffle with a smuggler. According to all the witnesses we've talked to, this is not true.
- Fatmata was 23 years old, the youngest of five siblings. She was from Sierra Leone; our team is in contact with Fatmata's family, who are happy to speak out and talk to people who want to report on the case.
- Fatmata was married to Abu Bakar, 24, who, alongside other migrants, was present when the shooting happened. Fatmata was driven to the hospital. Abu Bakar was promised he would be taken to the hospital with her but was put in detention instead.
- When Abu Bakar tried to take photos of Fatmata's blood-stained clothes as evidence, he was handcuffed, and driven away without news of his wife.
- After being kept in detention for 36 hours, Abu was offered a ride to the border by the police "so you go to Europe", in exchange for his silence.
- Abu Bakar refused and decided to stay in North Macedonia to seek Justice for Fatmata. At this point, he reached out to Second Tree for help, and staff members have been with Abu Bakar in North Macedonia since.
- Second Tree met Fatmata and Abu Bakar in 2022 when they were moved to Agia Eleni, one of the Greek refugee camps where Second Tree works.
- Fatmata's killing happened on the same day that FRONTEX was starting their first mission in North Macedonia.
- Abu Bakar has two lawyers: one from MYLA, an NGO of local lawyers in the capital, and another lawyer from the south. Second Tree is supporting institutional advocacy and media outreach.
- Abu Bakar has a number of video recordings and pictures of the aftermath of the shooting, as well as several audio recordings of his detention and interactions with police officers.
- On the 24th of May, 2023, Alessandra Moretti and 21 other MEPs submitted a [parliamentary question](#) to the European Commission.
- In May, the public prosecutor investigating the case announced that one policeman was under investigation. This was a significant development, as the initial statement mentioned no misconduct by the police and self-defence.
- Many have suggested that this would not have happened if it hadn't been for the attention the case attracted from media and international institutions.
- In July, the public prosecutor, Artan Ajro, who initially took the case, was promoted, and a new Public Prosecutor, Olivera Proeska, was appointed.
- On the 27th of September, 2023, Public Prosecutor Olivera Proeska, indicted the policeman who shot Fatmata.
- This unlikely development – a migrant bringing a police officer to trial – has been celebrated as a one-of-a-kind situation, and Abu Bakar and Fatmata's family are resolute to have truth and justice established.



## Fatmata's Body Repatriation

- Fatmata's body was taken to the state Morgue a few days after the killing.
- On the 21st of July, 85 days after Fatmata's killing, her body was released.
- The documents we obtained to ensure the repatriation were:
  - Abu Bakar and Fatmata's SL passports;
  - Abu Bakar and Fatmata's Marriage Certificate;
  - Fatmata's birth certificate;
  - Autopsy report;
  - Doctor's report on the cause of death;
  - Macedonian death certificate and International death certificate;
  - Declaration of death from the municipality of Gevgelija;
  - Sanitary inspection report on the body;
  - Diplomatic passport for the body from a Sierra Leone embassy. As a SL embassy is not present in North Macedonia, and the embassy officially in charge was located in Moscow, we obtained the waiver from the SL embassy in Berlin;
  - Approval from Macedonian ministry for expatriation of the body;
  - Approval for passage of the ministries of the countries the body travelled through (Serbia, Turkey, Burkina Faso).
- The Macedonian morgue had initially asked, quite overtly, for a bribe of €8500 to release the body (not for the transportation), and the signing of a contract with a transport service of their choice in order to proceed.
- On the last instance our staff was threatened with "the body being thrown in a field" in case we didn't provide them with the money.
- Next time, we went there with the press. After [media interrogation](#), the morgue agreed to release the body for €386.08, the state-mandated fee.
- Given the context, we decided to go with a funeral transport company from abroad (Serbia), suggested by the Head of the European Federation of Funeral Directors. Fatmata's body was initially transported via land to Belgrade.
- From Serbia, the body was repatriated to Sierra Leone after being flown from Serbia to Turkey, Turkey to Burkina Faso, then Burkina Faso to Sierra Leone. Giovanni Fontana, President of Second Tree, accompanied the body to Sierra Leone to see the body's complete return as Fatmata's family requested.
- On the 28th of July, 2023, Fatmata's body arrived in Sierra Leone.
- Fatmata was laid to rest in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on the 30th of July, 2023, where thousands of people joined the funeral ceremonies.
- The total cost of the repatriation was €9.843,17, most of which has been paid by an anonymous donor, the rest covered by Second Tree.
- Since the news that Fatmata's body was brought home, 3 families reached out asking for help to repatriate the body of a family member who has been lying in a freezer in Europe for months.
- We have established an informal network of organisations and individuals with experience with body repatriation, to help each other in future cases.