Radicals seize church buildings of Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Chernigov and Lvov regions

On January 16, 2019, the Church of the Holy Ascension of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Olenevka village, Borzna district, Chernigov region, was seized. It was done on instruction from the chairman the district state administration, with the active involvement of radicals and under the passive eye of police.

Members of S14 terrorist group used an angle grinder to break the lock. Some fifty young men broke into the church. They had no authorization documents confirming the legitimacy of their actions.

It occurred with the support of the Borzna district state administration which the day before had spread false information, alleging that the majority of the villagers had voted in favour of transferring the local religious community to the “Orthodox Church of Ukraine.”

According to the senior villager, Vladimir Krivtsy, 907 people are living in Olenevka, and taking part in the meeting were 72 villagers and 25 “guests.” As he noted, 37 people out of some 100 present voted for the “transfer.” However, the minutes of the meeting read that the decision was taken unanimously. The participants in the meeting say that only 26 people supported the “transfer,” and most of them had nothing to do with the local community.

Yet, the website of the Borzna district state administration states that “by a majority vote members of the Olenevka community took the decision to move to the Local Orthodox Church of Ukraine.”

In reality, parishioners of the Church of the Holy Ascension totally opposed such initiatives of the officials, spokespersons of the Nezhin diocese report. The parishioners gathered at their church in order to express their dissatisfaction and protest against such decisions, but they were not permitted to do so. The priest and parishioners were not let to enter the church.

The radicals came to the village on two buses, illegally seized the church and let the so-called “priests of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine” in the building. Later they posted in social networks photos from a molyeben celebrated in this church and told that representatives of the Svoboda association had joined them.

That same day supporters of the church structure recognized by Constantinople seized the Church of St. John the Baptist in Shandrovets village, Turka district, Lvov region. Aggressively disposed people, led by the village council chairman, broke the door down and seized the priest’s house. After that they

went to the church and broke the lock at its front door.

Earlier, on January 13, a meeting of the villagers took place, initiated by the chairman of the Shandrovets village council, Alexei Popil. Among those present was Alexander Labetsky, chairman of the Turka district state administration. The participants in the meeting took a decision to transfer the Church of St. John the Baptist to the jurisdiction of the “Orthodox Church of Ukraine.” However, according to Archpriest Iliya Urusky, rector of the church, his parishioners and he were told about the meeting an hour before it started. During the meeting, a divine service was being celebrated in the church, therefore, the members of the religious community could not attend the gathering. As the result, the decision was taken without them.

As spokespersons of the Lvov diocese noted, representatives of the authorities neglected the rights of the parishioners of the church which is in the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, thus flagrantly violating the laws of Ukraine.

“Neither parishioners nor the rector of the church do not agree with the decision taken by the village community concerning the transfer to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and will remain faithful to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church,” representatives of the Press Service of the Lvov diocese of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church said, “That is why we ask the authorities concerned and the mass media to interfere and protect the faithful and the rector of the Church of St. John the Baptist from infringement on their freedom of religion.”

Official website of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/

DECR Communication Service

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