



## Group of armed men break into Banjska Monastery in Kosovo



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On September 24, a group of armed men wearing masks breached the territory of the Banjska Monastery by breaking through the closed gate of the monastery on armored vehicles, the Diocese of Raška and Prizren of the Serbian Orthodox Church reports.

Currently, the monastery hosts a group of pilgrims from the city of Novi Sad, together with the group's priest and Father Superior Danilo with the brethren. According to public reports, "for security purposes, the brethren and the pilgrims locked themselves in the residential building and locked up the monastery's church". Presence of armed men in the monastery's yard and sporadic gunfire were also reported.

"The diocese strongly condemns the open violence which is happening in the religious site of the Serbian Orthodox Church and calls on all sides to cease the conflict", report on the Diocese site points out.

The breach of the monastery's territory took place concurrently with the worsening situation in the north of Kosovo, where one Kosovo policeman was killed and two others were wounded in an armed incident near the village of Banjska. "This is a serious incident which may have serious consequences, which is why it is of utmost importance to preserve peace and order", the statement by the Raška and Prizren Diocese says.

According to latest reports, the situation in the Banjska Monastery currently remains calm, although fears after the September 24 events are still being felt throughout the area and in the monastery itself. The armed men who broke through the gate have left the monastery's premises. Kosovo police and the EU Law Mission in Kosovo were seen at the monastery's entrance and in its yard.

The Diocese of Raška and Prizren has made it public that the living quarters of the monastery still host "its Father Superior with the brethren as well as a group of pilgrims, two children among them. The monastery administration reports that so far the situation stays calm, the Divine Liturgy is being served regularly in the chapel of the monastery in hopes that the dramatic events will soon be over".

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