

Ukrainian Orthodox church in Lug village, Zakarpattia, was seized



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In the morning of November 11, in Lug village, Rakhiv district, Zakarpattia region, unidentified men wearing camouflage with chevrons of ‘Armor’ private security firm, backed up by the police and the military, forced the locks and seized the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), **the Union of Orthodox Journalists** reports.

Live video of the incident was published on the social media page of Archpriest Vladimir Legach, rector of the church.

The perpetrators closed the gates and blocked entrance to the territory for the parishioners, claiming to be conducting “an inventory of the property” of the UOC community. One of the female parishioners who managed to enter the church building and start filming was attacked. Her phone was knocked out of her hand and she was pushed out of the church territory.

The Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit was built in 2008 thanks to efforts of the local community.

On July 30, 2023, a group of the villagers had held an illegal “meeting” attended by the Uniates, but with no church community members present, to transfer the church to the OCU (Orthodox Church of Ukraine).

At the same time, at a parish meeting held on July 23, the community of the Descent of the Holy Spirit Church had unanimously voted to maintain affiliation with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The decision was documented in the minutes of the meeting, as the parishioners informed in writing the head of the Zakarpattia Region Administration and the director of the Department of Culture of the Regional State Administration. The community has registered membership.

On September 2, several dozens of men led by an OCU “priest” Ruslan Kocherzhuk, made an attempt to break into the church building. The parishioners managed to defend their church.

On Sunday, November 12, the community had to celebrate the Divine Liturgy outdoors, in the yard of the rector’s house. Video of the divine service was also published on the priest’s social media page.

Almost a hundred parishioners were praying in the open air. According to the community members, that same day the OCU representatives celebrated the “divine service” in the seized church, with just several people in attendance.

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