02/08/2024

Georgian Church to Azerbaijan: Use our church for services, not music videos



The Georgian Patriarchate issued a statement this week condemning the abuse of a Georgian Orthodox church in Azerbaijani, with an appeal to the authorities to reopen the church for liturgical services.

The statement explains: “For several days, a music video has been circulating on the internet, with footage shot at St. George’s Church in Kurmukhi, in the Qakh Region, on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. The footage shows an Azerbaijani musician standing on the church’s ambo and ‘performing’ a certain composition on an electronic musical instrument.”

St. George’s Church in Kurmukhi is a spiritual and cultural treasure, built in the 12th-century golden age of the Kingdom of Georgia. It was granted the status of a cultural and historical monument by Azerbaijani authorities.

The Church statement notes that the video caused outrage and the artist later deleted it from YouTube, saying he did it out of “love and respect for Georgian culture and art.” However, clips from the video still circulate online, the Church notes.

Unfortunately, the church has been misused for “some pseudo-cultural-artistic campaign” in the past, and the Church has always raised its voice.

The Patriarchate calls upon Azerbaijani governmental and religious authorities to “investigate the facts in a timely manner and take appropriate measures to prevent such incidents in the future.”

The Georgian Church concludes with an appeal to restore all such churches and monasteries in Azerbaijani to their intended purpose:

Finally, such cases once again confirm how important it is to restore the original purpose of Georgian churches and monasteries on the territory of Azerbaijan. Therefore, we appeal to the relevant representatives of the Azerbaijani authorities to make St. George’s Church in Kurmukhi an active church and give the Georgian Patriarchate the right to regularly conduct worship services in it, as the above-mentioned fact is not the first case and we constantly face the problem that causes tension, righteous indignation of society, and violation of religious sensibilities.

The Albanian Orthodox Church has also faced several such incidents. In 2022, a rap video was filmed before an historical iconostasis kept in a state museum. In 2017, a jazz band played in an Orthodox church, broadcast on Albanian television.

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