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Cyprus: church standoff ends, priest to be taken to court



A standoff between residents of the village of Erimi, Limassol, and police ended late on Thursday, several hours after the former had holed themselves up in a church.

Earlier, a group of pilgrims apparently visiting the Ayios (Saint) Georgios Spileon church in Erimi, Limassol, to mark his name day, sought refuge inside to avoid getting booked by police for an illegal gathering.

A police spokesman confirmed the standoff started in the morning after authorities were notified of a service taking place at the church in the presence of the public. The spokesman said there were between 20 to 25 people involved.

Around 20 cars were parked outside the small church, apparently abandoned by their owners some of whom were spotted leaving the scene on foot when officers arrived.

Around 3pm police called in reinforcements and a paddy wagon when 70

youngsters from the nearby village showed up to ask the officers to leave.

Tensions rose briefly, but no incidents occurred. The police eventually departed.

The local priest and at least one other person were booked while police recorded the licence plates numbers of the cars.

Other reports said the €300 spot fine issued against the priest – for breaking the quarantine decree – would be voided so that he could be charged and taken to court.

Source