

04/02/2019

Schismatics and police beat canonical priest in Ternopil (VIDEO)



Violence and persecution against the canonical Ukrainian Church continues to escalate since Constantinople created a new church in December and granted it a tomos of autocephaly in January.

Supporters of the schismatic Ukrainian church organized a brawl at Holy Transfiguration Church in the village of Gnezdichno in the Ternopil Province yesterday. Among those injured by the schismatics and the police was the rector of the canonical parish Fr. Stephan Balan, reports the site of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

So-called activists began to gather around the church in the morning before the start of the Divine Liturgy, organizing a provocation to disrupt the service. Their illegal plans had become known the day before.

“We warned the administration and the police that they were planning a conflict—do something. They wrote a statement that they cannot interfere in religious affairs. They gathered all of their deputies on Friday, but nothing was

decided. Perhaps they were afraid, I don't know," said Fr. Stephan. "And so there was a fight."

The faithful of the canonical parish stood on the stairs of the church to prevent it from being seized. The village council chairman later showed up and tried to speak to those who had gathered, but the people were so aggressive and insulting to him that he got worried, threw the keys to the church and left, Fr. Stephan reports.

Then the police decided to intervene, taking the side of the provocateurs.

"The police began to take matters into their own hands and went on the offensive. A special unit quickly arrived and began to beat us," recalls the parish council chairman. "Everything is clear in the video. They beat me, they shoved the faithful. Then some men in protective uniforms with red and black stripes came and started throwing us all around. They grabbed me by the head and broke my finger. Then we called an ambulance. The medical workers recorded injuries on my whole body—head, chest, hands," said the chairman, who suffered more than the rest.

Activists held a village meeting on January 13 at which a part of the attendees voted to move into the schismatic church, though the parish community resolved to remain in the canonical Church. At that time, the parties managed to come to an agreement of peaceful co-existence and the schismatic representatives not to seize the church.

However, as Fr. Stephan explains, the local school director could not accept this state of affairs and provoked the clash. He threatens to fire those who go to services at the canonical church and to send children to the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine. He controls the school by fear, Fr. Stephan said.

The head of the local police is obviously on the side of the schismatics, and it's obvious that orders came down from above, Fr. Stephan commented.

The church is still sealed off. The parishioners together with Fr. Stephan prayed a moleben and dispersed.

"I think they're waiting for the official registration of the charter, then there will be an official storming. I counted 95 people today—people that never come to church. Our parishioners, who are always in church, numbered more than 60," Fr. Stephan said.



(Source: OrthoChristian)