News

Vladimir Putin, in a suit, sits in front of three Russian soldiers wearing dress uniforms

Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a ceremony at the Kremlin in Moscow Sept. 30, 2022, to annex four Ukrainian regions partly occupied by his forces. On Aug. 22, Russian occupiers launched an attack on St. Teresa of the Child of Jesus Roman Catholic Church in the town of Skadovsk in eastern Ukraine's Kherson region, according to a Facebook post by Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odessa-Simferopol. (OSV News photo/Sputnik/Sergei Guneev, pool via Reuters)

Lilia Kovalyk-Vasiuta

View Author Profile



OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Lviv, Ukraine — August 25, 2023

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Russian occupiers launched an attack Aug. 22 on St. Teresa of the Child of Jesus Roman Catholic Church in the town of Skadovsk, located in the Kherson region in eastern Ukraine, Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odessa-Simferopol confirmed on Facebook.

"A group of armed special forces, cloaked in masks and wielding weapons, encircled the Roman Catholic chapel," the bishop said, describing the dramatic event.

With determined force, they "broke down the door and broke into the chapel and began a search," Szyrokoradiuk said.

Russians, who are occupying the region, declared that their actions constituted a deliberate operation designed to counteract terrorist activities. Russia occupies Crimea and parts of the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, Mykolayiv and Zaporizhzhya oblasts, or regions.

"Fortunately, there were no people in the chapel at the time, otherwise they all would have been captured as terrorists," stated the bishop.

"Access to the chapel is denied to anyone, and the searches are ongoing. Strangely, they also broke windows," Szyrokoradiuk said.

Advertisement

"I believe they will find whatever they want there: weapons, explosives, you name it," the bishop wrote, citing a common practice of the occupier -- to brand religious premises as places of "terrorism" or "drug dealing" only to seize property and make the faithful unable to access.

Szyrokoradiuk also said in his Facebook post that Russians dubbed the parish pastor as "the main drug lord, falsely putting him on the wanted list." The priest left for Poland before the start of the war in February 2022. Another priest is now in charge of the parish and the bishop said he forbade him to go to the church as he would "simply be arrested and imprisoned."

"As we can see, the methods of the KGB haven't changed," the bishop said, remembering the Soviet persecution of both Roman and Ukrainian Catholic churches under communism.

"Therefore, I ask everyone for prayers, so that the good Lord may shorten the days of the devil's actions and the days of suffering for our people," emphasized the bishop.

Parishioners previously gathered in the church for prayer, but now they no longer have such an opportunity. The chapel is closed and no one is allowed in, the bishop said, asking for prayers for Catholics, who are being persecuted by the Russian occupiers.

Skadovsk has been occupied almost since the beginning of the Russian invasion. Russian troops entered the city at the beginning of March 2022.