

SERBIA: United Methodist Church Attacked Because the Roma Worship There

By Drasko Djenović, Center 9 (www.centar9.info), 15 June 2010

After a murder of a young boy (age 17) in Jabuka village (*Apfeldorf, in German*) near Pancevo, Serbia, on 10th of June 2010, tension is growing between the local ethnic Macedonians and Roma people who both live in that village, some 50 km from Belgrade. Angry Macedonians started to target and attack local Roma population.

One Roma wooden shack was burned in fire and for four days Roma people were afraid to leave their houses, in fear of arson attack. Besides Roma houses, a target was the local Methodist church in Jabuka where many Roma people were converted and come to worship.

Already on Friday, 11th of June, Methodist Superintendent in Serbia Dr. Ana Kunčak-Palik requested police protection, and also from the Serbian Ministry of Religion. There was a Facebook announcement of the church attack and a reason given: its connection with the Roma. However, appeal to the officials was in vain.

The first attack occurred on a Saturday evening, while the next one was on Sunday evening when all the windows, a church plate with the church name and part of roof were stoned. Police was present while this occurred police was present but did not react. Ms. Lila Balovski, a native Macedonian Methodist minister who serves in Jabuka and also working with the Roma people for years, told us that on Monday evening Gendarmerie finally protected the church building. Local police protected her house where she lives with family. Ms. Balovski received threats because she “protects Roma people.”

Pančevo municipal major, Ms. Vesna Martinović, ordered for food and medicaments to be distributed to the Roma in Jabuka since most of them were afraid to leave houses. Reportedly, in some stores they were denied purchase of bread and other grocery items.

Jabuka is probably the only majority Orthodox believers’ village in Serbia without a local Serbian Orthodox Church. In Jabuka regular services have UMC, a small Brethren Free Church and few times per year a liturgy is served in a Romanian Orthodox church.

Population and major ethnic groups in Jabuka since foundation:

Year	Total	<u>Germans</u>	<u>Romani ans</u>	<u>Croats</u>	<u>Macedonians</u>	<u>Serb s</u>	<u>Hungarians</u>	<u>Roma</u> and others
1833	2200	1840	360	-	-	-	-	-
1921	3265	2901	348	16	-	-	-	-
1944	2603	2323	260	16	-	4	-	-
1946	3784	14	260	-	3480	28	2	-
1971	5453	2	140	-	3380	1261	2	668
2002	6312	1	79	14	2054	3224	27	913

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jabuka> Wikipedia  3.0