

Police raid church in Uzbekistan during worship

April 17, 2023

Police raided an unregistered Baptist church in southern Uzbekistan during a worship service and detained 10 worshippers after beating and using electric shock prods on some individuals, the [Forum 18 human rights organization reported](#).

Uniformed officers reportedly stormed the Council of Churches Baptist congregation in Karshi during Sunday morning worship services on April 9, when Western Christians observed Easter and one week before Orthodox Easter.

In an April 17 email, Alan Donaldson, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, stated a contact in Uzbekistan was “not aware of attacks on any Baptist church” but noted reports of an [attack on a separatist or secessionist church](#).

German Baptist musicians visiting

Forum 18 reported officials who arrived during the April 9 service in Karshi identified themselves as representatives of the local district committee, saying they were acting in accordance with a circular from the Religious Affairs Committee and the Culture Ministry prohibiting events involving foreign groups.

Church members said the raid followed the congregation’s unsuccessful attempts to rent local halls for Easter presentations featuring visiting Baptist musicians from Germany. The German Baptist musicians were singing at the church when the police stormed the sanctuary.

Forum 18 reported police “brutally beat” some church members and “also used electric shock prods and other implements to incapacitate the brothers and sisters,” while fellow worshippers wept and prayed.

“Local Baptists said 10 church members, including young people were taken to the police station. Video images show police officers holding one church member ... [a]round the neck as he was on the ground and as they put him in a police van,” Forum 18 reported.

Police officials refused to answer any questions when contacted by the Norway-based human rights organization.

The day after the raid in Karshi, police also raided a Council of Churches Baptist congregation in Denov, in Uzbekistan’s Surkhandarya region, that also featured the German Baptist musicians, Forum 18 reported.

“They said the meeting was illegal and forcibly dispersed those present,” the human rights organization stated.

Last year, the [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended](#) the Department of State include Uzbekistan to its Special Watch List “for engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act,” but the [State Department did not follow that recommendation](#).