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Migrants rob Belgrade churchgoers in the middle of religious service

Remix (04.06.2020) - <https://rmx.news/article/article/serbia-migrants-rob-belgrade-churchgoers-in-the-middle-of-religious-service> - Two migrants of unknown origin entered the St. Alexander Nevsky church in the Serbian capital Belgrade on Sunday and then robbed several attendants of the liturgy of their money and mobile phones. Those attending the church service managed to catch one of the thieves and hand him over to police responding to the scene, but the other got away.

"There were two of them. They broke into the church during the liturgy, which was in progress, and they stole two purses along with three mobile phones," Vajo Jović, the elder of the Serbian Orthodox Church, told Serbian news site nova.rs.

"Upon entering the temple, they split up on two sides, and after the people saw what was happening, they managed to catch one of them and take away his mobile phones and the money he stole," Jović said. "The other managed to escape. He took two purses, in one there were 3,500 dinars, while in the other there were 18,000, which was the entire pension of one woman."

Jović expressed outrage over a robbery that occurred in a house of worship.

"We handed that young man over to the police, while the other managed to escape," Jović said. "This is an insult. Isn't anything sacred to people, such as the liturgy? Terrible."

In January this year, Greece relocated to the mainland several thousand migrants crammed on its Mediterranean Island near the Turkish coast. While the onset of the coronavirus pandemic has kept them in Greece, the country has [reopened](#) its asylum office in the second half of May, leading to an increase of the migrants seeking to reach Western Europe via the Balkans migration route.

Although there have been a number of [attacks on churches by migrants](#) in recent times, outright robberies of parishioners appears to be a new escalation.

According to the [latest update](#) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently 8,052 migrants in Serbia, the majority of them in 19 refugee centers across the country. Their stated countries of origin are Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, Morocco and Palestine. The Serbian government lifted all its coronavirus-related movement restrictions on May 14 and the migrants now have freedom of movement on the territory of the country.

In compliance with a recent verdict of the European Court of Justice, Hungary has [closed](#) both its transit zones at Röszke and Tompa on its border with Serbia and migrants can only apply for asylum at the Belgrade consulate.

Title image: The St. Alexander Nevsky church in the Serbian capital Belgrade. (source: Lumen Roma, Wikimedia Commons)
