

# **UKRAINE: 1030th anniversary of the 'Baptism of Rus' : the ROC and UOC/ Moscow Patriarchate narrative**

Pictures: <https://bit.ly/2LKUYHu>

## ***Heads, members of 10 local Orthodox Churches to celebrate 1030th anniversary of Baptism of Rus in Moscow***

Moscow, July 27, Interfax – [www.interfax-religion.com/](http://www.interfax-religion.com/) – Representatives of ten local Orthodox Churches from around the world will come to Moscow to attend celebrations marking the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus.

Delegations from the Orthodox Church of Alexandria, the Church of Antioch, the Church of Jerusalem, the Orthodox Church of Georgia, the Orthodox Church of Serbia, the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, the Orthodox Church of Albania, the Orthodox Church of Poland, and the Orthodox Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia are coming to the Russian capital, the Moscow Patriarchate told Interfax-Religion.

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia will meet Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria and All Africa and members of other church delegations on Friday.

“It is very significant that our brothers from all across the Orthodox world are now coming to Moscow and Kiev so that we together can express our unity on this date, which is so important for the Russian Orthodox Church,” the spokesman of the Russian patriarch, priest Alexander Volkov, told Interfax-Religion.

In turn, the deputy head of the Synodal Department for External Church Relations Archpriest Nikolay Balashov,

described the Baptism of Rus as “an epoch-making event in Russian history.”

“Everything that happened before is lost in the dark and is known to us only in fragments. A new people and a new civilization were born in the Dnieper baptistery, and this event was accompanied by such a strong creative surge that the newly born Orthodox Rus expanded later to new territories, and we received from God a ‘sixth part of the Earth,’ where different people now live, and new state borders are drawn, but with its own history, its own culture, and its global vision united for many centuries to come,” the priest told Interfax-Religion.

“The Orthodox belief in Christ, the belief that St. Prince Vladimir chose, formed all of us, that is, the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Belarusians, the Moldovans, and all descendants of the Baptism of St. Vladimir, no matter what they call themselves now,” the patriarch’s spokesman said.

“The anniversary of our Baptism is an event of global significance,” and it is not accidental that all of the Orthodox Churches in the world deemed it fitting to attend it, “share their joy with us, sending their hierarchs both to Kiev and to Moscow,” the priest said.

The Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodore will be Russia’s main guest, Father Nikolay said, noting that he “is our long-standing and faithful friend, who wholeheartedly fell in love with the Russians after spending ten years of study and service in Odessa.”

“Let’s pray together, let’s share our joy and troubles, let’s think about how to build up the unity of our global Orthodox family,” the priest said.

The patriarchs of the Alexandrian and Russian Orthodox Churches, accompanied by members of other delegations, will lead a vigil service on Friday evening.

The Day of the Baptism of Rus was declared a state memorial date in Russia in 2010 at the Archbishop Council's request.

***Over 100,000 pilgrims to attend Kiev cross procession – Ukrainian Orthodox Church***

Moscow, July 27, Interfax – The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is expecting even more believers to attend the Kiev cross procession marking the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus than attended last year.

“It is still early to make final assessments, but in any case, there will be more than 100,000 people. I have been on Vladimirskaya Gorka [Vladimir Hill] for more than an hour, waiting for a religious service, and there's a nonstop flow of people coming here from three streets,” Ukrainian Orthodox Church spokesman Vasily Anisimov told Interfax-Religion.

He expressed hope that the festivities would not be marred by provocations. “God can never be cursed. Let's hope that everything will be alright,” Anisimov said.

Dozens of buses from western Ukraine were stopped on the Zhitomir Highway leading to Kiev this morning because of they had supposedly been mined, he said.

There were reports of attempts to prevent believers from attending the cross procession in several Ukrainian regions on Thursday.

For instance, Ukrainian Security Service officers have stopped five buses in Zaporozhye for several hours under the pretext that they had been mined, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's press service said.

Cars full of armed people blocked another nine buses from Zaporozhye and Melitopol.

Attempts to keep people from the Kiev cross procession were also undertaken in the Zhitomir and Rovno regions, and

obstacles were created for pilgrims from the Nezhin and Odessa dioceses.

Still, tens of thousands of people have come to Kiev, the church's press service said.

The attempts to block the highway have backfired, Archpriest Viktor Zemlianoy of the Rovno Diocese said. "Even more people than expected came because of this resistance," he said.

### ***Kiev cross procession begins***

Kiev, July 27, Interfax – A Ukrainian Orthodox Church cross procession marking the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus has begun in downtown Kiev.

After the prayer service on Vladimirska Gorka (Vladimir Hill), believers moved across European Square and along Grushevsky Street toward the Kiev Lavra of the Caves, an Interfax correspondent reported.

Clergymen carrying religious banners and icons are leading the column.

Law enforcement officers are providing security.

In attendance are the co-chairs of the Opposition Bloc faction in the Verkhovna Rada, Yury Boyko and Aleksander Vilkul, faction members Vadim Novinsky, Nestor Shufrich, Mikhail Dobkin, and Yury Pavlenko, and Vladimir Litvin, an independent MP.

The situation is calm in downtown Kiev. Due to the high humidity and temperature, some participants sometimes have felt dizzy in the crowd, but ambulances are on site providing aid.

### ***About 250,000 attend cross procession in Kiev – organizers (1)***

Moscow, July 27, Interfax – The cross procession held in Kiev

on Friday afternoon to mark the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus brought together 250,000 believers from various Ukrainian regions and from other countries, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's press service said.

"Participants in today's cross procession moved in a mighty flow toward the center of the capital for three hours. It was a marvelously joyful event," church spokesperson Vasily Anisimov told Interfax-Religion.

A total of 100,000 people attended the celebration last year.

**(1) HRWF Comment: No alternative reliable source confirms or denies these statistics. Noteworthy is the fact that the UOC/Moscow Patriarchate in Kyiv and the ROC in Moscow name the event "the baptism of the Rus" and not "the christianization of the Kievan Rus".**

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**UKRAINE: UOC – MP holds religious procession in Kyiv – See videos: <https://bit.ly/20o00IH>**

Ukrinform (27.07.2018) – <https://bit.ly/20o00IH> – A religious procession of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP) has ended in Kyiv without any incidents. The pilgrims marched from Saint Volodymyr Hill to the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra monastery.

According to an Ukrinform correspondent, the column was led by a security police patrol. In particular, several police cars,

as well as a car with the inscription "bomb disposal service," were used.

The column was also accompanied by police officers with dogs. Law enforcers constantly checked flower beds located along the route of the column. National Guard servicemen were deployed along the route of the procession.

On the way to the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, UOC-MP Head Onufriy laid flowers at the monument to Hero of the Heavenly Hundred Mikhail Zhiznevsky, who was killed on Hrushevskoho Street in Kyiv on January 22, 2014 during clashes between the security forces and EuroMaidan activists.

Earlier, the UOC-MP held a prayer service on Saint Volodymyr Hill. In addition to the clergy, the event was attended by Opposition Bloc MPs Yuriy Boyko, Vadim Novinsky, Nestor Shufrych, Oleksandr Vilkul, and independent MP Volodymyr Lytvyn.

President Petro Poroshenko did not attend the celebrations but will attend those to be organized by the UOC Kyiv Patriarchate on the next day.

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## **Russia: 23 Jehovah's Witnesses behind bars (+ 1) and 3 put under house arrest**

JW Headquarters (18.07.2018) – On Sunday 15 July 2018, around 4 p.m., a police raid took place in Penza (about 650 km SE of Moscow). The police officers arrived at homes where four small groups of Witnesses had gathered. They had waited for someone to leave the apartments before bursting in and conducting searches. In one of the groups, a female investigator searched

6 women, ordering them to remove all of their clothes. As is often the case, the police seized all electronic devices and storage media, printed photographs, personal notes and notebooks. They detained about 20 adults in total, taking them to the police station. At 2 or 3 a.m. they finally let all the women go, along with most of the men. However Vladimir Alushkin, Vladimir Kulyasov, Andrey Magliv, and Denis Timoshin were detained. On 17 July, a judge sentenced Mr. Alushkin to pre-trial detention (two months), while the other three men have been placed under house arrest (two months).

Additionally, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a press release (<https://bit.ly/2uK9y7G>) to express their 'deep concern' over the escalating persecution of JW's in Russia. The press release included a reminder that JW's were persecuted (many even killed) during the Nazi regime. The German government targeted JW's largely due to the fact they would not swear allegiance to the state (any state) or serve in the military. Thus, learning from such a dark period in history, the Museum's director urged "leaders from across society to forcefully denounce the anti-Jehovah's Witnesses campaign currently underway" in Russia:

*The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum remains deeply concerned over the continuing harassment and persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses by Russian authorities. Since the Russian Supreme Court labeled Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist organization" in April 2016, Witness property has been seized by the state, numerous Witnesses have been arrested, and hundreds have fled the country.*

*"The state-sponsored persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses continues to escalate in the Russian Federation," said Tad Stahnke, the Museum's director of international educational outreach. "The Museum urges leaders from across society to forcefully denounce the anti-Jehovah's Witness campaign currently underway."*

*During the Nazi regime, the German government targeted Jehovah's Witnesses because their religious beliefs prevented them from adhering to the requirements of the Nazi state. Witnesses do not swear allegiance to any state or serve in the military. These religious convictions as well as their international connections—the headquarters are in the United States and some Witnesses travel abroad for their missionary work—made them a perceived threat to Nazism. Of the 25,000–30,000 active Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany, about half were convicted and sentenced during the Nazi period. Of those convicted or sentenced, between 2,000 and 2,500 were sent to concentration camps, as were a total of about 700 to 800 non-German Witnesses. An estimated 1,000 German Witnesses and 400 non-German Witnesses died in the camps.*

*A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hate, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Its far-reaching educational programs and global impact are made possible by generous donors. For more information, visit [ushmm.org](http://ushmm.org).*

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## **RUSSIA: 22 Jehovah's Witnesses behind bars/ First female JW locked up**

JW Headquarters / Russia Religion News (10.07.2018) – <https://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/180706a.html> – On 6 July 2018, 46-year-old Sergei Poliakov and his wife, Anastasia, who are suspected of professing the religion of



Jehovah's Witnesses, were sent to an Omsk SIZO (pretrial detention). They were arrested during searches conducted on 4 July 2018 in the homes of local residents.

The Poliakov couple were incommunicado for two days and the door to their apartment was found to be broken down. Simultaneous searches were conducted in at least four residences of Omsk. Beginning at 7:00 a.m., searches continued until 15:00 and were conducted in houses, parcels of land, business structures, and in citizens' parked cars. All sorts of electronic devices and data storage were seized. During a search, witnesses actively helped law enforcement personnel, prompted, and even tried to question believers. The operation was conducted by Denis Loginovsky, an investigator of the Azov Investigation Department of the Russian Investigative Committee for Omsk oblast.

It is still not known which articles the criminal case will be based on. However law enforcement agencies in various regions of Russia mistakenly take the shared religious confession of citizens as participation in an extremist organization. The attention of prominent public figures of Russia and also of the Council for Human Rights under the Russian president has already been called to this problem. (tr. by PDS, posted 9 July 2018)

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## **RUSSIA: 16 Jehovah's Witnesses behind bars as of 8 June**

HRWF (08.06.2018) – The number of Jehovah's Witnesses deprived of their freedom has been dramatically and rapidly increasing

in Russia since the ban of their religion in April 2017.

It can unfortunately be expected that the situation will worsen day after day and that young Jehovah's Witnesses will also be targeted for their conscientious objection to military service, as members of a banned extremist religious organization (!).

Here is an updated list of 16 prisoners as of 8 June 2018. Their pre-trial detention is systematically prolonged until their trial starts.

See below the region they are from, followed by the name of the detainee and birthdate, the date of the arrest, the article of the criminal code and the dates of their pre-trial detention.

### ***Charges***

Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1: Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity.

Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2: Participation in the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity.

### ***List of Prisoners***

#### **Oryol Region Oryol**

Dennis CHRISTENSEN (18-Dec-72)

25-May-17

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 26-May-18 / 1-Aug-18

**Republic of Tatarstan Naberezhniye Chelny**

Ilkham Shamilevich Karimov (9-Feb-81)

27-Mar-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 29-May-18/ 25-Jul-18

Vladimir Nikolayevich Myakushin (6-Nov-87)

27-Mar-18

Article 282.2(1), (1.1) and (2)

Pre-trial detention: 29-May-18/ 25-Jul-18

Konstantin Matrashov (1983)

27-Mar-18

Article 282.2(1), (1.1) and (2)

Pre-trial detention: 29-May-18/ 25-Jul-18

Aydar Maratovich Yulmetyev (Aug-93)

27-Mar-18

Article 282.2(1), (1.1) and (2)

Pre-trial detention: 31-May-18/ 25-Jul-18

**Republic of Bashkortostan Ufa**

Anatoliy Sergeyeovich Vilitovich (15-Sep-86)

10-Apr-18

Article 282.2(2)

Pre-trial detention: 12-Apr-18/ 2-Jul-18

**Murmansk Region Polyarny**

Roman Nikolayevich Markin (18-Mar-74)

18-Apr-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 23-Apr-18/ 11-Jun-18

Viktor Fedorovich Trofimov (26-Mar-57)

18-Apr-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 23-Apr-18/ 12-Jun-18

**Vladivostok Region Vladivostok**

Valentin Pavlovich Osadchuk (15-Mar-78)

19-Apr-18

Article 282.2(2)

Pre-trial detention: 23-Apr-18/ 20-Jun-18

**Orenburg Region Orenburg**

Aleksandr Gennadyevich Suvorov (20-Apr-80)

16-May-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 19-May-18/ 14-Jul-18

Vladimir Yuryevich Kochnev (15-Oct-79)

16-May-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 19-May-18/ 14-Jul-18

**Magadan Region Magadan**

Konstantin Nikolayevich Petrov (9-Aug-86)

30-May-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 01-Jun-18/ 29-Jul-18

Ivan Grigoryevich Puyda (C.O.)(5-Nov-78)

30-May-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 01-Jun-18 30/-Jul-18

Yevgeniy Anatolyevich Zyablov (9-Mar-77)

30-May-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 01-Jun-18/ 29-Jul-18

Sergey Liviyevich Yerkin (23-Jun-53)

30-May-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention: 01-Jun-18/ 29-Jul-18

**Tomsk Region Tomsk**

Sergey Gennadyevich Klimov (C.O.) (26-Mar-70)

3-Jun-18

Article 282.2(1)

Pre-trial detention 05-Jun-18 04-Aug-18

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# **RUSSIA: Open Letter from 10 of the wives of 16 imprisoned Jehovah's Witnesses to President Putin's adviser Mikhail Fedotov**

HRWF (08.06.2018) – On 7 June, ten of the wives of the 16 imprisoned JWs in Russia sent an open letter (Russian version: <https://jw-russia.org/news/18060718-345.html>) plea to Mikhail Fedotov—advisor to President Putin and chairman of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights.

Human Rights Without Frontiers has a pdf of the full list of names of JWs with open criminal cases against them, as a result of the home arrests that began in April. In addition to the prisoners, dozens of believers in 11 regions are under house arrest and/or are not permitted to leave the region.

## **Text of the Open Letter in English**

***To the Russian Federation Presidential Council  
For the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights***

Honorable Mr. Fedotov! Honorable members of the Human Rights

Council!

This open letter to you is a cry of desperation. People who are very dear to us, our husbands, those who feed us, the fathers of our children, peaceable, honest people, who are always ready to help others, are being thrown behind bars for being suspected of reading Bible commandments and praying together with us and our children to the God whose name, as recorded in the Bible, is Jehovah.

As of this day in Russia already 17 individuals are being held in pre-trial detention. One of our fellow believers has been in custody for over a year. Dozens more believers, in 11 regions of Russia, are under house arrest or are forbidden to leave their cities of residence. With each passing day, their number is increasing. Taking into account that in Russia there are 175,000 professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, we wonder how many more dozens, hundreds or thousands of victims of conscience will it take before the unjust criminal persecution of people for their faith in God is brought to an end.

Under the guise of fighting extremism, many of us, and even our children, have been threatened with weapons by agents of the special forces and ordered to lie face down. Our homes have been raided and searched, our telephones and computers have been seized, so we can't work or live a normal life. Our family photographs, our passports and other personal documents, and Bibles have been confiscated. They are trying to force us to live in fear and shake every time there's a knock at the door or the sound of a siren on the street, as we await arrest merely for our faith. Some believers have already been dismissed from their places of work after many years of faultless work just because the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses is banned in Russia. We cannot find the answers to the questions of why we are being subjected to such harassment in our country, and which religion will be the next to fall victim after us?

The law-enforcement agencies that are persecuting our husbands for their faith in God explain that it is because of the April 20, 2017, decision of the Russian Federation Supreme Court to liquidate all legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia.

However, both the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice, during the hearing at the Supreme Court, and the Russian Federation Government, after the decision was handed down, officially stated that the court's decision would not result in any violations of the rights of citizens to freedom of worship.

The aforementioned decision of the Supreme Court did not ban the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. It only involved legal entities. So why are the law-enforcement agents acting in contravention of the will of the government of our country? Who in our country benefits from the mass repression of religious believers? Why are our relatives being accused of a serious crime with the prospect of imprisonment from 6 to 10 years for fictitious extremist activity (Article 282.2 of the RF Criminal Code)? Why are the law-enforcement agents mistakenly interpreting peaceful expression of faith on God for participation in an extremist organization?

Honorable members of the Council, please help us to receive answers to these questions.

In the face of such monstrous circumstances, we are afraid for our children's future. The ground has been laid for children to be torn away from parents, whose faith in God has been declared "wrong." News that information on children whose parents are Jehovah's Witnesses is being gathered in educational and medical facilities is very worrying. It is not surprising that virtually every week whole families of our fellow believers are abandoning everything and fleeing abroad to seek political asylum for the protection of their children.

In return for freedom and a quiet life, we are being invited

to disown our faith. This is not just a figure of speech—investigators have directly invited us to sign documents in order to avoid punishment for “extremism.” If not, in their words, no attorney will be able to save us. But we cannot stop believing in God. It is a right that every individual has from birth. The Russian Federation is a multi-confessional state, and we, as citizens of Russia, have the right to expect that our rights will be respected by the state. We are not asking for any special privileges. We are asking for just one thing—please, defend our rights.

Honorable members of the Council! A campaign of terror has been unleashed against an entire religion, one of the largest Christian religions in Russia. Fundamental human rights are being trampled on: the right to freedom of worship and personal inviolability, the right to personal dignity, the right to privacy, the right to the inviolability of the home, to freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of worship, the right to private property.

If the Russian government does not quickly put an end to this growing campaign of terror, the administration will be faced with a nation-wide human rights catastrophe. We are certain that you have the power to take action now! We ask that you please pass this information on to the President of the Russian Federation, and use all possible legal means to restore the rights of religious believers.

With respect, the wives of men who are being held in custody:

Alyona Vilitkevich (Republic of Bashkortostan)

Anna Zyablova (Magadan Region)

Yulia Klimova (Tomsk Region)

Galina Kochneva (Orenburg Region)

Irina Christensen (Oryol Region)

Svetlana Markina (Murmansk Region)

Tatyana Petrova (Magadan Region)

Anastasia Puyda (Khabarovsk Territory)



Natalia Suvorova (Orenburg Region)

Trofimova Ulyana (Murmansk Region)

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## **RUSSIA: A second Jehovah's Witness behind bars**

HRWF (29.04.2018) – On 10 April 2018, police came to the home of 32-year-old Anatoliy Vilitkevich and took him into custody, accusing him of organizing the activity of an extremist organization. Vilitkevich was merely considering Bible-based publications with a small group of others who also were subjected to searches.

Two days later, the Leninskiy District Court of Ufa (Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia), ruled to keep Anatoliy in pre-trial detention for 1 month and 22 days, that is, until June 2, 2018. Anatoliy faces up to 10 years imprisonment.

Anatoliy is the first Russian Jehovah's Witness to be held in detention since the Supreme Court's banning decision of 20 April 2017.

It is unclear why Jehovah's Witnesses in Ufa are suddenly being targeted, but authorities claim to have "volumes" of information against the local Witnesses.

The legal team for Anatoliy filed an appeal regarding his detention on 16 April but it was denied three days later.

### ***Dennis Christensen in prison since May 2017***

On May 25, 2017, heavily armed police officers and agents of the Federal Security Service (FSB) disrupted a peaceful weekly religious service of Jehovah's Witnesses in Oryol, Russia.

Since authorities there had liquidated the Oryol Local Religious Organization (LRO) in June 2016 on extremism charges, they alleged that the congregation's religious services were continuing the activity of an extremist organization.

The prosecutor initiated criminal charges against Dennis Christensen, one of the elders in the Oryol Congregation, for his role in the congregation's religious services. The Sovietskiy District Court ordered that Mr. Christensen be held in pretrial detention. His trial is currently ongoing.

### ***250 violations of the rights of JW in 1 year***

Since the Russian Supreme Court ruled to ban the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses a year ago (20 April 2017), there have been at least 250 violations of the rights of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, including attacks, vandalism, and other kinds of discrimination. Seventeen of their properties have been confiscated, and lawsuits have been launched to seize another 52 properties.

These most recent raids represent a serious escalation of state-sponsored human rights abuse, reminiscent of Soviet era repression and Nazi persecution experienced by minority groups in the early days of these former regimes. Without international awareness, it can be expected that this situation will increase in both severity and frequency in the days ahead.

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## **Russia: Jehovah's Witnesses'**

# property in Far East confiscated

Arbitration in Priamurie deprives Jehovah's Witnesses of  
property in Tynda

RIA Novosty (21.02.2018) –  
<http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/180221a.html> – An  
arbitration court of Amur oblast made a decision to deprive  
the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses\* (whose  
activity is banned in Russia because of extremism) of  
property, the website of the court reports.

By a decision of the Russian Supreme Court of 20 April 2017,  
the activity of the organization "Administrative Center of  
Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia"\* and local religious  
organizations that are members of its structure was  
terminated. The Russian Ministry of Justice entered the  
Jehovah's Witnesses\* into the list of organizations that have  
been liquidated for extremism. The Russian Supreme Court  
decided to convert to the ownership of the Russian federation  
the property of the liquidated organization that remains after  
the satisfaction of the claims of creditors.

According to information of the file of the arbitration court,  
the banned religious organization in Tynda owns land and a  
structure of 431.4 square meters in area.

"Because the local religious organization of Jehovah's  
Witnesses\* (of the city of Tynda) owns a parcel of land in the  
city of Tynda, the Russian Ministry of Justice for Amur oblast  
requested ordering with respect to the organization  
proceedings for distribution of identified property. By  
decision of the arbitration court of the Amur oblast, the  
petition of the directorate of the Russian Ministry of Justice  
for Amur oblast was granted," the website of the court

reports.

The proceedings for distribution of the property are ordered by 6 August 2018. Sergei Kryazhev (Moscow) was appointed arbitration manager.

\*An extremist organization prohibited in Russia.  
(tr. by PDS, posted 21 February 2018)

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## **Believers of all faiths and atheists in prison: 24 countries of particular concern**

HRWF Int'l (10.01.2018) – *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l* has released its 2017 database of believers and non-believers who have been imprisoned for exercising their freedom of religion or belief.

Twenty-four countries in all were identified by *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l* for depriving believers and unbelievers of their freedom in 2017: **Algeria, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.**

“In 2017, we documented over 2200 individual cases of illegal imprisonment of believers and non-believers and we carried out campaigns to get their release, some with success,” according to Fautré, director of *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l*.

Among all denominations, Christians of all faiths were in jail in the highest number of countries: Protestants in 13 countries, Catholics and Orthodox in 2 countries.

However, members of a dozen other religious or belief communities are known to have been in jail in 2017: Jehovah's Witnesses in 6 countries; Sunnis in 4 countries; Shias, Said Nursi and Tabligh Jamaat followers in 3 countries; Ahmadis, Baha'is, Buddhists and Sufis in 2 countries; Atheists in Egypt, Falun Gong practitioners in China, and Scientologists in Russia.

"Prison terms are usually imposed on peaceful and law-abiding members of religious or belief groups on the basis of laws restricting their freedom to change religion, share one's beliefs, and practice their right to freedom of association, worship and assembly. Additionally, they may be imprisoned simply because of their religious identity", Fautré said.

According to the database, **China, Iran and South Korea** recorded the largest number of freedom of religion or belief prisoners.

In **China**, Falun Gong practitioners, whose movement was banned in 1999, are massively put in prison, a number of Catholic priests and bishops have also been missing, since their arrests many years ago for being faithful to the Pope instead of swearing allegiance to the Communist Party.

Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestants belonging to the mushrooming network of house churches, and Uyghur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists, both of which are systematically suspected of separatism, are also particular targets of the regime.

In **Iran**, the Baha'is, whose movement is considered a heresy of Islam, make up the highest number of prisoners. They are followed by home-grown Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians who extensively carry out missionary activities among their fellow citizens despite the risk of imprisonment and

execution. Baluchi and Kurdish Sunnis as well as Sufis are also particularly targeted.

In **South Korea**, over 300 young objectors to military service were still serving 18-month prison terms at the end of 2017. Since the Korean War, more than 19,200 Jehovah's Witnesses have reportedly been sentenced to a combined total of over 37,200 years in prison for refusing to perform military service. Eritrea, Singapore and Tajikistan are other countries which still imprison conscientious objectors.

"Our best wish for 2018 is that the EU converts its words into action and fully uses the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief to help release many FoRB prisoners of conscience," Fautré hopes.

The lists of prisoners per country can be consulted at: <http://hrwf.eu/forb-intro/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

*(\* ) Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l has been monitoring freedom of religion or belief as a non-religious organization since 1989. In 2017 it covered in its daily newsletter more than 70 countries where there were incidents related to freedom of religion or belief, intolerance and discrimination. See its news database at <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>*

**For further information, contact**

Email: [international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.net](mailto:international.secretariat.brussels@hrwf.net) or [w.fautre@hrwf.net](mailto:w.fautre@hrwf.net)

Website: <http://www.hrwf.eu>

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# **RUSSIA: ORTHODOX SECT-FIGHTER A. DVORKIN RILES HINDUS**

*Lawsuit by Kumar Prakash against Irenaeus of Lyon Russian association of Centers for Study of Religions and Sects discussed in State Duma*

SOVA Center (15.12.2017) – <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/> – On 12 December 2017, a roundtable was held in the State Duma, the occasion for which was an appeal by the head of the Center for Facilitating the Preservation and Development of Hindu Culture, Kumar Prakash, who is worried about the growth of religious intolerance in Russia.

Participants in the event included Vadim Samodurov (the emcee), Prasun Prakash (the son of Kumar Prakash), Pavel Kostylev, attorney Kali Akhilgov, Semmi Kotvani (the president of the Association of Indian Business in Russia), and deputy Valery Rashkin (C.P.R.F.), who in March 2017 called for investigating the activity of the “sectologist” **Alexander Dvorkin** because of his statements about Hinduism.

Prasun Parkash described for the audience how “A. Dvorkin’s forum has for two years now conducted propaganda work against their society and several news media draw upon this branch of the forum for information for their articles.” In late 2016 Kumar Prakash filed a lawsuit in court against the St. Irenaeus of Lyon Russian Association of Centers for Study of Religions and Sects, headed by A. Dvorkin, but he did not win the case.

“The forum that Mr. Dvorkin leads,” V. Rashkin said in his turn, “harms the establishment of intercultural and friendly relations with India. I think that it has already reached severity. If people begin to come out onto the streets in

rallies, this would get hot. It is now time to take measures from the government's point of view and to attract the attention of law enforcement agencies.”

We recall that in early February 2017 there was a demonstration of protest in Delhi, whose participants accused A. Dvorkin of “defaming Hinduism and offending their religious feelings.” (tr. by PDS, posted 16 December 2017)

Article in Russian:

<http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/authorities/religion-general/2017/12/d38497/>