

RUSSIA: Women Jehovah's Witnesses detained for days

Two women arrested for faith in Smolensk region

Russia Religion News (10.10.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2yzPman> – On 7 October 2018, personnel of the UFSB for Smolensk oblast, along with security officers of the Center for Combating Extremism and troops of the Special Rapid Response Team, conducted a number of searches in residences of Smolenskians who are suspected of professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. In the city of Sychevk (Smolensk oblast) for a third day no communication has come out from two women, Natalia Sorokina and Maria Troshina. Presumably, they are in detention, since according to neighbors they were taken off in an unknown direction by personnel who conducted the search.

It has been learned that a criminal case was opened on the basis of part 2 of article 282.2 of the CCRF (participation in the activity of an extremist society). According to the interpretation of the Smolensk UFSB [Directorate of the Federal Security Service], unidentified persons have continued the activity of the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, which was liquidated by a court in 2017. On 2 October 2018, Andrei Lantsov, a judge of the Lenin district court of the city of Smolensk, issued a warrant for searches in residences of citizens whom the UFSB considers to have connection with the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the country mistakenly interpret peaceful meetings of believers as "extremist

activity.” Dozens of rights advocates and also the Council on Human Rights under the president of the RF express concern over the growing religious repressions. (tr. by PDS, posted 10 October 2018)

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