

226 Jehovah's Witnesses are facing criminal charges in Russia and Crimea

HRWF (18.07.2019) – 226 Jehovah's Witnesses are being prosecuted on the basis of article 282 of Russia's criminal code across the Russian Federation and in Crimea, according to the Office of Public Information the World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses.

As of July 17:

226 JWs are facing criminal charges (the highest number since the ban in 2017)

37 are being held in detention

25 are under house arrest

On 17 July, the authorities in the city of Nizhniy Novgorod (western Russia) raided homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. The total number of homes raided and of JWs arrested/detained still has to be confirmed.

Over the past 20 months, the Soviet-like persecution of JWs in Russia has been increasing in intensity and in frequency:

2018

December 9:

108 JWs—since April 2017 ban—facing criminal charges

December 11:

Putin said: “Jehovah’s Witnesses are Christians too. I don’t quite understand why they are persecuted. So this should be looked into. This must be done.” (during meeting w/Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights—source [link](#))

December 31:

274 homes of Jehovah’s Witnesses raided in 2018 (average 22 per month)

2019

February:

Danish citizen Dennis Christensen convicted and sentenced to six years in prison

February:

Seven men tortured in the city of Surgut

April 1:

Sergey Skrynnikov convicted and fined RUB 350,000

May 29:

Russia was informed by the United Nations Working Group Against Arbitrary Detention that the detention of Dmitriy Mikhaylov was arbitrary and that they strongly disagreed with Russia labeling, arresting, and detaining JW's in general as "extremists." Mikhaylov is the first of six cases regarding JW's that have been filed so far with the UN WGAD.

June:

216 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses were raided in the first six months of 2019 (average 36 per month); in just the first six months of 2019, on average, we have seen a 60% increase in home raids compared to 2018.

215 JW's facing criminal charges (in the six-month period since Putin's comments, the number nearly doubled compared to the previous 20 months (108)

July 4:

Alexandr Solovyev convicted and fined RUB 300,000