

BELARUS: Jehovah's Witnesses in Belarus denied registration and then arrested

JW-RU Blogspot (16.08.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2cFv5Yr> – In Logoisk, Belarus, a squad of police arrested two Jehovah's Witnesses for preaching and distributing religious literature. They are accused of not clearing the distribution of religious literature with local authorities. Materials regarding the incident were collected by a precinct police inspector of the Logoisk department of internal affairs and sent to the Logoisk district executive committee for further examination.

According to the claims of some, in keeping with Belarusian legislation the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation does not have the right to operate on the territory of the district inasmuch as it is not registered on the territory of Logoisk.

However the Belarusian constitution says otherwise:

Article 31. Each person has the right to determine independently his attitude toward religion and to profess any religion individually or jointly with others, or not to profess any religion, and to express and disseminate convictions connected with his attitude toward religion and to participate in the conduct of religious worship, rituals, and rites that are not prohibited by law.

A recently published report by the USA State Department about the condition of religious liberties in Belarus states that despite the legislative confirmation of freedom of conscience, Belarusian authorities forbid religious activity by unregistered groups.

Several believers who wish to register are refused registration. In addition, the registration procedure itself is rather complex. For persons desiring to register it creates a broad spectrum of requirements that are the grounds for refusing registration.