

# **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 JWs in Russia. The press release included a reminder that JWs were persecuted (many even killed) during the Nazi regime. The German government targeted JWs 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 Sergeyevich 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 JW's 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.