

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

## **CRIMEA: A Jehovah's Witness sentenced to six years in prison**

By Jarrod Lopez (\*)

HRWF (05.03.2020) – On 5 March, the Dzhankoysky District Court of the Republic of Crimea convicted Sergey Filatov and sentenced him to six years in prison. He is the first one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea to be convicted for the peaceful exercise of his beliefs since the 2017 Russian Supreme Court ruling that effectively banned the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and Crimea. Sergey and his wife, Natalya, have four children, two of whom are

minors. He will appeal the conviction.

Jarrold Lopes, a spokesman for the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, states: "We are deeply disturbed that the court sentenced Sergey to prison for six years, separating him from his wife and children. He is the first one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea to be convicted for so-called extremist activity. This bleak development in Crimea is the latest example of Russia exporting its patently extreme religious intolerance. Human rights advocates across the globe have publicly criticized Russia for its baseless attack on Jehovah's Witnesses, internationally recognized as peaceful, societally responsible Christians. We hope that senior officials in Russia will soon correct the injustice being doled out in their local courts and that judges in Crimea will follow suit."

### **Filatov Case Details**

Sergey Filatov was first arrested in what was one of the largest special operations against Jehovah's Witnesses in recent years. On the night of November 16, 2018, some 200 officers raided eight homes of Jehovah's Witnesses in the area. More than 35 law-enforcement officers searched Sergey's home, and about half of them were armed special forces soldiers. Sergey was questioned and then released.

This morning, the court sentenced him to prison because the prosecution claimed that he "undermines the foundations of constitutional order and the security of the state." Yet all he is accused of is reading the Bible together with his friends in his own home.

The Filatov case is rife with falsifications. On the date (October 10, 2017) the investigators alleged a religious service was held in Filatov's home, there actually was no such service, as proven by telephone records. The investigators unlawfully altered evidence; experts for the case did not

present their credentials, as required by law; one of the witnesses for the prosecution gave false testimony, as proven by the testimony of other witnesses.

“It is sad that the massive repression of faith, which has been unleashed by security services in dozens of regions of Russia, has reached Crimea,” states Yaroslav Sivulskiy, a spokesman for the European Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses. “Sergey Filatov was convicted of a grave criminal offense, as a dangerous enemy of the state, for a simple family worship service. The case is obviously trumped up. The investigation did not try to conceal its falsifications in the case, and the court clearly sympathized with the prosecution.”

Sergey Filatov is the 30th Jehovah’s Witness convicted in modern Russia and Crimea since 2017. His verdict was a consequence of the Supreme Court’s decision to liquidate all 22 local religious organizations (LROs) of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Crimea. In the less than 2 years of the LROs existence, they never received any fines, warnings, or other claims from the authorities.

### **Gerasimov Case**

Shortly following Sergey’s conviction, the Yalta City Court of the Republic of Crimea convicted Artem Gerasimov and fined him 400,000 rubles (over \$6,000 U.S.). Artem was temporarily detained and interrogated on March 20, 2019, after Federal Security Service (FSB) officers raided eight homes of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Crimean cities of Alupka and Yalta. During the searches, officers seized computers and other electronic devices along with Bibles. Subsequently, FSB investigators charged Artem with organizing extremist activities, merely for meeting with others to discuss the Bible. Artem will appeal his conviction.

### **Criminalization of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Crimea (Since 2017)**

Convicted and sentenced to prison: 10  
Pretrial detention: 26  
Total convicted: 31  
Total still under investigation: 316

## Jarrold Lopes

Communications Officer and Spokesman  
Office of Public Information | Newsroom  
World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses  
New York, USA

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in  
**/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-**  
**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1266**

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in  
**/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-**  
**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1266**

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in  
**/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-**  
**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1267**

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in  
**/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-**  
**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1267**

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in  
**/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-**  
**content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1268**