

Dennis Christensen's six-year prison sentence maintained on appeal



Picture: JW.org

HRWF (23.05.2019) – Today, the three-judge panel of the Oryol Regional Court denied the appeal of Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen and Jehovah's Witness, and upheld the six-year sentence he received in February. About 80 people, mostly Jehovah's Witnesses, were in attendance to hear the decision. Officials from Denmark and Australia were also present.

Mr. Christensen was arrested on 25 May 2017, in Oryol, during the raid of a peaceful gathering of Jehovah's Witnesses by Federal Security Service agents and armed police officers wearing masks. Some 50 other worshippers were also arrested but later released without charge.

The raid and arrest came after Russia's Supreme Court banned the Jehovah's Witnesses in April 2017 over alleged extremism. It was the first time that a Jehovah's Witness has been jailed since the Soviet Union.

After his May arrest, The Sovietsky District Court ordered him to be held in pre-trial detention for two months, which he appealed unsuccessfully. On 20 July 2017 the Soviet district court of the city of Orel, ordered Mr. Christensen to remain in an investigation cell for another 4 months, until 23 November. Despite appeals, his pre-trial detention was repeatedly prolonged.

On 6 February 2019, the Zheleznodorozhniy District Court of Oryol found Mr. Christensen guilty under Article 282.2 (1) of the Russian Criminal Code for "organising the activity of an extremist organization." He was sentenced to 6 years in prison.