

Kazakhstan: Pentecostals shut down by the authorities

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<https://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/180330b.html> – An account of charges for an administrative violation of law has been composed against a resident of Whymkent of South Kazakhstan oblast, Dilobarkhon Sultanova, after she showed a casual acquaintance how to download the Bible from the application “Play Market.” It is planned to try the woman for “evangelism.”

Dilobarkhon Sultanova described how on 11 January of this year police arrested her under the pretext of checking documents and took her to the police department, the Christian megaportal Invictory.com reports, with a reference to Radio Azattyk.

After spending an hour in the police department, she learned that a statement had been written against her by an acquaintance, Elmira Inibekova. Sultanova had become acquainted with her in the “New Life” protestant church in December of last year, at Christmas. Dilobarkhon herself says that she saw Inibekova personally only twice, and she also corresponded with her on the WhatsApp application.

“She wrote me first on WhatsApp. She asked me to come outside and download for her a Bible on her telephone from ‘Play Market.’ Literally after a minute and a half, we parted, and I was arrested. And before this Inibekova had asked me to get a Bible in printed form for her,” Dilobarkhon Sultanova noted.

The Christian emphasized that the Bible is accessible in the “Play Market” app along with all the other books of religious significance (for example, the Quran).

“The Bible is in open access and it does not belong to any single religious association. Besides it is not a religious application (for downloading),” Dilobarkhon Sultanova noted.

The record of charges for the administrative violation of law says that on 11 January of this year, Dilobarkhon Sultanova “disseminated the ideology of the ‘New Life’ religious association, and urged citizen Elmira Inibekova to study the sacred book of the Bible for the purpose of drawing her into the ranks of adherents of the ideology of the ‘New Life’ religious association.”

Sultanova maintains that she never engaged in preaching activity. She said that “she did not disseminate any ideology and she was acquainted with this citizen in church that she [the woman] frequently attended and she was interested in the religious association.”

In addition, Sultanova says, a staff member of the directorate for religious affairs of the South Kazakhstan oblast refused to provide for her a lawyer, which she needed, and did not provide translations of materials of the case and the record of charges in Russian. Only after filing a complaint in the prosecutor’s office in the department for combating corruption did the situation change somehow, the woman says. The Christian also wrote a complaint to the court against the action of the staff member of the directorate for religious affairs of the South Kazakhstan oblast regarding violation of her rights.

The court was supposed to begin consideration of the administrative violation of law regarding Dilobarkhon Sultanova last week, but it was postponed for an indefinite period of time, since it was originally planned to consider the woman’s complaint against the directorate for religious affairs of the South Kazakhstan oblast for violation of her rights.

The pastor of the "New Life" church, Zhetis Rauilov, notes that this incident is not the first in a series of prosecutions of their church by local authorities, and they began finding various violations in the organization back in July of last year. At the time, representatives of the sanitary and epidemiological station arrived on the basis of a complaint by citizens that they supposedly had killed a dog in their church. Rauilov says that it had been hit by a car and the perpetrators were not found.

Now by decision of the court, based on claims of the fire fighting service about shortage of fire detectors in the premises, the activity of the church has been suspended and a fine of 100 times monthly income has been assessed on the organization. (tr. by PDS, posted 29 March 2018)