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RUSSIA: A Tablighi Muslim sentenced to 3 years in a penal colony

A Tablighi Jamaat Muslim sentenced to three years in a penal colony

Mikhail Kolotylin was convicted under Art. 282.2 Criminal Code for organizing Tablighi Jamaat activities in the Volgograd region.

Human Rights Without Frontiers urges the Russian authorities to release Muslim prisoners belonging to the peaceful movement of Tablighi Jamaat and to put an end to the ban on this non-

violent movement.

HRWF/ SOVA Center (11.12.2021) – On December 2, 2021, the Soviet District Court of Volgograd sentenced 51-year-old local **Mikhail Kolotilin**, accused of involvement in the Tablighi Jamaat movement banned in Russia. He was found guilty of organizing the activities of an extremist organization (Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code) and sentenced to three years in a penal colony.

The Kolotilin case was submitted to the court in September 2021. Details of the accusation were not specified.

Earlier, in July 2020, it was reported that six suspects in the Tablighi Jamaat cell organization were detained in the Volgograd region.

The religious movement “Tablighi Jamaat” was banned in Russia in 2009, in the opinion of SOVA Center in Moscow, without proper grounds. This association was engaged in the propaganda of fundamentalist Islam, but was not noticed in any calls for violence, and therefore the persecution of its supporters, in the opinion of SOVA, is unjustified.

List of Tabligh Jamaat Muslims in prison or with an unknown sentence

KAMCHYBEKOV, Islambek (6 years $\frac{1}{2}$)

KOZHAMKULOV, Shakir Temishevich (6 years $\frac{1}{2}$)

SUYUNDUK, Uulu Kanybek, (6 years $\frac{1}{2}$)

HALMATOV, Aybek (Unknown sentence, Art 282.2, Part 2, July 7, 2021)

KALBAEV, Artyk (Unknown sentence, Art 282.2, Part 1, July 7,

2021)

KOZONOV, Altynbek (Unknown sentence, Art 282.2, Part 2, July 7, 2021)

KUSHUEV, Murzy (Unknown sentence, Art 282.2, Part 2, July 7, 2021)

MAMAZHUNUSOV, Aybek (Unknown sentence, Art 282.2, Part 1, July 7, 2021)

UULU, Asan (Correct the spelling)/ (Unknown sentence, Art 282.2, Part 2, July 7, 2021)

Note: As of 10 December the prison was still unknown as the publication of the court decision is forbidden in such cases, according to SOVA Center (Moscow).

What is Tabligh(i) Jamaat?

HRWF Annual Report 2020 – Tabligh Jamaat (sometimes spelled Tablighi Jama'at) is a revivalist missionary movement within Islam that was founded in India in the early 20th century. The term means 'those who preach' and it is sometimes called the 'Society for Spreading Faith'. Adherents do not proselytise to non-Muslims. Instead their aim is to revive the faith of less devout Muslims and to follow Islamic religious practices more vigorously.

Tabligh Jamaat originated in the Deobandi School of Sunni Islam in Uttar Pradesh in north India. Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (1885-1944), an Islamic scholar and Sufi teacher, is credited as its founder. Its world headquarters are located in the New Delhi suburb of Basti Nizamuddin.

Tabligh Jamaat adheres to fundamentalist interpretations of Islamic doctrine and refrains from participating in political struggles. Its aim is to make Muslims more pious and to propagate Islam. It does not use or advocate for violence, and it also does not call for the overthrow of the political regime in Russia. The Moscow-based Sova Centre and other human rights groups monitoring the activities of Tabligh Jamaat in Russia have never found any evidence linking Tabligh Jamaat to terrorism or acts of violence. Nevertheless, the Russian Supreme Court banned this movement in a ruling dated 7 May 2009 based on accusations of extremism, spreading propaganda of hatred and intentions of seizing power.

The movement has grown significantly over time. It is said to have around 80 million followers in 150 countries throughout Asia, Africa and Europe^[1] but it is particularly prevalent in South and Central Asia.

In Europe its headquarters, complete with a *madrasah* (religious school), are in the UK with about 50,000 followers in Dewsbury (Yorkshire). There are also centres in London, Glasgow, Leicester, and Birmingham. In France, Tabligh Jamaat has been able to attract a significant number of Muslims of Arabian and African origin and is estimated to have about 100,000 followers. Its activity is concentrated in the larger Paris region. In Spain it operates from Barcelona among a quickly growing number of Muslim migrants.

In North America, Tabligh Jamaat has met some success in gaining converts among African Americans and Caribbean immigrants. Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia,

Atlanta, New York City, and Washington, D.C., are the major centres of Tabligh Jamaat activities in the US.

Tabligh Jamaat adherents never constitute themselves into formal 'trusts' or 'companies', and shun political, legal, or social engagement with the wider world. They have – intentionally – few formal points of contact within their communities.

Annual gatherings (called *ijtima*) are held in various countries and attract large crowds. The largest ones occur in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The annual World Gathering in Tongi, Bangladesh, (called *Bishwa Ijtimā*) is the most popular Tabligh Jamaat pilgrimage in the world with approximately five million people attending each year, significantly larger than the traditional *Hajj* to Mecca.

Photo : Credit: Stock – Alamy

[1] Taylor, Jenny, "Understanding and engaging with the Tabligh Jamaat," Lausanne Movement, November 2015. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2015-11/understanding-and-engaging-with-the-tablighi-jamaat>.

Further reading about FORB in Russia on HRWF website

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