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## **RUSSIA: Freedom of religion of belief : FORB special bimonthly newsletter**

### **RUSSIA: Freedom of religion of belief : FORB special bimonthly newsletter (16-31.05.2022)**

**31.05.2022 – RUSSIA: Five years after Jehovah’s Witness ban, jailings continue**

Five years on from the 2017 ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses, prosecutors have launched criminal cases on “extremism” charges against more than 600 individuals, of whom more than

200 have so far been convicted. Nearly 60 have received prison terms ranging from one to eight years. Andrey Vlasov, who is registered disabled, was sentenced to seven years in labour camp. "The essence of the accusation boils down to the fact that after 2017 I remained a believer and profess the Jehovah's Witness religion," he told the court.

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**28.05.2022 – Maksim Zavrashnov, a Nizhny Novgorod resident, received a six-year suspended sentence for participating in a peaceful religious meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/301609.html>

On May 30, 2022, the judge of the Moscow District Court of Nizhny Novgorod, Azamat Ionov, sentenced Maksim Zavrashnov to 6 years suspended.

The verdict has not entered into force and can be appealed. The believer pleaded not guilty. There are no victims in the case, but the prosecutor asked the court to sentence the defendant to 5 years in prison.

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**27.05.2022 – Russia expels Jehovah's Witness prisoner to home country**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=629079DCDA4E8>

Dennis Christensen and his wife have arrived safely in his native Denmark. This happened on the day following his release from a penal colony where the believer spent five years, Kasparov.ru was told by the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses on 27 May.

Dennis arrived in Russia in 1995, aged 22, as a volunteer in order to help to construct a building for Jehovah's Witnesses outside St. Petersburg. In 1999 he settled in Murmansk, where

he met his future wife, Irina.

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### **26.05.2022 – Dennis Christensen released from Russian prison and deported to Denmark**

Link to full text in Russian : <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/260859.html>

Dennis Christensen, along with his wife, arrived home safely to his home country of Denmark on May 25, 2022. This occurred the next day after he was released from a penal colony in Russia where he spent a total of five years.

“I’m very happy to be released from prison and reunited with my dear wife, Irina,” said Dennis. “I want to thank the Danish government, especially the consular office in Moscow, for trying to help me. I am also grateful to my brothers and sisters in the faith who supported me and my wife spiritually, emotionally, and physically.”

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### **26.05.2022 – Pavel Popov, an entrepreneur from the Chelyabinsk Region, was handed a six-year suspended sentence for reading the Bible**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/261521.html>

On May 25, 2022, the judge of the Metallurgical District Court of Chelyabinsk, Maria Melnikova, found 45-year-old Pavel Popov from Yemanzhelinsk guilty of organizing the activities of an extremist organization. The court made it a crime to discuss biblical topics with friends.

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### **24.05.2022 – A Court sentenced a woman, located in the Krasnodar Territory, to a four-year penal colony term for**

## **practicing her faith in Jehovah God**

Link to full text in Russian : <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/241452.html>

On May 23, 2022, Olga Marchenko, a judge of the Pavlovsky District Court of the Krasnodar Territory, sentenced 45-year-old Lyudmila Shchekoldina to four years and one month in a penal colony. The woman was taken into custody in the courtroom. The court equated her ordinary religious practices with participation in the activities of an extremist organization and involving others in it.

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## **24.05.2022 – Jehovah’s Witnesses were searched in Yaroslavl. A criminal case has been initiated**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/241131.html>

On May 19, 2022, one of Jehovah’s Witness, Anton Kokovin, 31, was detained on the central street of the city of Yaroslavl. After a search and interrogation, a written undertaking not to leave was taken from the believer. On that day, officers searched at least 3 dwellings.

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## **23.05.2022 – A Kemerovo Region disabled person, Andrey Vlasov, was handed a seven-year penal colony sentence for holding Bible-based discussions**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/231437.html>

On May 23, 2022, the judge of the Central District Court of Prokopyevsk Pavel Kotykhov found 53-year-old Andrey Vlasov guilty of organizing the activities of an extremist community and sentenced him to 7 colony codes. He was taken into custody in the courtroom.

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**23.05.2022 – An appeal filed in Khanty-Mansiysk reversed Andrey Sazonov's sentence and ordered the case to be retried**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/231629.html>

On May 19, 2022, the collegium of the Court of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Area-Yugra overturned the sentence of Andrey Sazonov and sent the case for a new trial to the Uray City Court by a differently constituted bench.

Two months earlier, Judge Ilnur Gilmanov of the Uray City Court found Andrey Sazonov guilty of organizing and financing extremist activities, despite the fact that the testimony of witnesses and the results of the examination refuted the charge. The believer was fined 500,000 rubles.

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**17.05.2022 – A Tomsk Court of appeals upheld Yevgeniy Korotun's sentence – seven years in prison for believing in Jehovah God**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/05/171049.html>

On May 16, 2022, a panel of judges of the Tomsk Regional Court chaired by Yuriy Krivoshein upheld the sentence of 52-year-old Jehovah's Witness Yevgeniy Korotun. By leaving the believer behind bars, the authorities deprived him of the opportunity to raise his minor son.

The verdict has entered into force. Taking into account the time spent in the pre-trial detention center, Korotun will have to serve another 4.5 years in a general regime colony. The believer considers himself innocent and can appeal the verdict in cassation.

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