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RUSSIA : Freedom of religion or belief: Special Bimonthly FORB Digest (01–15.02.2022)

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15.02.2022 – A Cherkessk appeals court confirmed the sentence of a woman with a disability for practicing her faith

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/151707.html>

On February 15, 2022, the Supreme Court of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic upheld the five-year suspended sentence of Yelena Menchikova.

In December 2021, the court of first instance found the believer guilty of participating in the activities of an extremist organization and involving other persons in it, considering it a crime that Yelena Menchikova discussed the Bible with others, including at religious meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses.

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15.02.2022 – Mass searches of Jehovah's Witnesses took place in Kuban. At least one believer was sent to jail

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/151600.html>

On Sunday morning, 13 February 2022, at least 25 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses were raided in the villages of Vyselki and Berezanskaya in Krasnodar Territory. Another search took place in Novorossiysk. According to preliminary information, a criminal case was opened for belief in God against three men – Valeriy Vichkayev, Vitaliy Ushakov and Yevgeniy Bochko.

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15.02.2022 – An appeals Court upheld the verdict of an 80-year-old widow from Seversk: a four-year suspended sentence for reading the Bible

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/150931.html>

On February 14, 2022, the Tomsk Regional Court approved the

sentence for teacher Yelena Saveliyeva: 4 years of suspended sentence for practicing her religion.

Addressing the panel of judges, the believer emphasized the absurdity of her sentence: "My faith teaches me not to kill, not to deceive, not to be a vile person, not to wish harm to my neighbor, not to envy, to be kind and compassionate, to be a humble and conscientious person, to see in everyone good, wish your neighbor all the best, help, love and enjoy life.

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11.01.2022 – A Chuvashia Court fined three Jehovah's Witnesses for talking about God

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/110948.html>

On February 10, 2022, Sergey Orlov, judge of the Kalininsky District Court of Cheboksary, found three local Jehovah's Witnesses guilty of extremism. Vladimir Dutkin was sentenced to a fine of 500,000 rubles, while Valeriy Yakovlev and Vladimir Chesnokov were fined 400,000 rubles.

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09.02.2022 – Putin hears from head of Supreme Court about ruling favorable to Jehovah's Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian:
http://rapsinews.ru/judicial_news/20220209/307714165.html

Actions consisting exclusively of exercising the rights of freedom of conscience and freedom of religious confession cannot be considered to be extremist, declared the chairman of the Russian Supreme Court, Viacheslav Lebedev.

“Actions that do not contain indicators of extremism and consisting exclusively of exercising the rights of freedom of conscience and freedom of religious confession, including by means of performance of religious rituals and ceremonies, do not constitute elements of a crime,” Lebedev said in the course of a conference of judges of courts of ordinary jurisdiction and arbitration courts of the Russian Federation.

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09.02.2022 – A secondary appeal in Novosibirsk upheld an imprisonment term for 68-year-old Yuriy Saveliyev

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/091403.html>

On February 7, 2022 Novosibirsk Regional Court upheld the sentence of Leninsky District Court of Novosibirsk against Yuriy Saveliyev – 6 years in a general regime colony and 1 year of restricted freedom for believing in God.

As an additional punishment, the court deprived the believer of the right to engage in activities related to administration and participation in public and religious organizations for a period of three years.

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09.02.2022 – The court in Volgograd confirmed the verdict of Tablighi Jamaat’s follower

On February 8, 2022, the Volgograd Regional Court confirmed the verdict of 51-year-old local resident Mikhail Kolotilin under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 Criminal Code (organization of activities of a prohibited organization).

In December 2021, the Soviet District Court of Volgograd sentenced Kolotilin to three years in prison in a general regime colony, finding him guilty of involvement in the Tablighi Jamaat movement banned in Russia. He was also sentenced to an additional punishment in the form of a five-year ban on educational activities.

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06.02.2022 – Kremlin behind Moscow patriarchate's crackdown on dissident churchmen and movement – OpEd

The Kremlin is behind the Moscow Patriarchate's crackdown on dissidents among the clergy and among Orthodox social movements, Aleksey Makarkin says; but the Russian church in some cases has gone even further than the state because it fears that the state will begin to use its organs against the church and undermine popular support for the faith.

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04.02.2022 – Arrested, convicted, served time, Deported. What is occurring with Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia based on Konstantin Bazhenov's experience

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/041224.html>

In 2021, one of the first Jehovah's Witnesses that was sent behind bars after the Russian Supreme Court decided to ban the organization was released from prison and deported from Russia. His story is told in this four-minute video.

As soon as Konstantin Bazhenov left the colony, he was detained and deported to Ukraine because his Russian citizenship was revoked due to criminal prosecution.

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04.02.2022 – Another search in Kemerovo. A criminal case is initiated against a 58-year-old Jehovah's Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/041420.html>

In the early morning of February 3, 2022, a search was conducted at the home of a Kemerovo resident Vladimir Baikalov. A day earlier, a criminal case was initiated against him on charges of participation in the activities of an extremist organization.

A criminal case under Part 2 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation against Baikalov was initiated by Aleksandra Isaeva, senior investigator of the investigative department for the Zavodskoy district of the city of Kemerovo.

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03.02.2022 – Ussuriysk-based Sergey Melnikov sentenced to three years of probation for adhering to beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/031411.html>

On February 3, 2022, Dmitriy Babushkin, a judge of the Ussuriysky District Court of the Primorsky Territory, found Sergey Melnikov guilty of participating in the activities of an extremist organization and gave him a three-year suspended sentence. The believer can appeal the verdict.

On June 5, 2019, Sergey Melnikov was detained in his own car while talking with Konstantin Belousov, who, as it turned out

later, collaborated with the FSB.

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02.02.2022 – A Krasnoyarsk court sentenced Anatoliy Gorbunov to a six-year prison term for discussing the Bible with fellow believers

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/02/021055.html>

On February 2, 2022, Mariya Kunik, judge of the Oktyabrsky District Court of Krasnoyarsk, found 64-year-old Anatoliy Gorbunov guilty of extremism and sentenced him to 6 years in a penal colony. The believer is taken into custody.

In Soviet times, Anatoly Gorbunov's father and grandfather were declared "enemies of the people" and exiled to Siberia. In 1993 they were rehabilitated.

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