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RUSSIA: Freedom of religion or belief: Special Bimonthly FORB Digest (16.04–30.04.2022)

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29.04.2022 – Maykop police continues raids on Jehovah's Witnesses for the second month

Link to full text in

Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/291504.html>

It became known that in the period from April 19 to 26, 2022, searches were carried out in Maykop at the homes of local believers at least at five addresses. Some of them were interrogated by the Investigative Committee.

On the evening of April 19, a group of seven law enforcers searched the home of a local resident. Her computer, laptop and phone were confiscated.

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28.04.2022 – Debate over sanctions against Moscow patriarchate

Link to full text in Russian: <https://cutt.ly/IGGcpy2>

Calls for introducing sanctions against the RPTs (Russian Orthodox Church) and its leader, Kirill, have provoked hysteria among Russian officials. This is reported by Channel 5.

The deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, gave birth to a pathetic, propagandistic communication in defense of the RPTs and he spoke about “anti-Russian madness,” which “demands sanctions against the patriarch of Moscow and all-Rus.”

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27.04.2022 – A Court sentenced a former City of Seversk Administration employee to two years and two months in prison for reading the Bible

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/271429.html>

On April 26, 2022, the judge of the Seversk City Court of the Tomsk Region, Yekaterina Soldatenko, sentenced Andrey Ledyaykin to 2 years and 2 months in a penal colony. The court

considered the participation of a believer in peaceful religious meeting as extremism. He is taken into custody in the courtroom.

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26.04.2022 – Seven Jehovah’s Witnesses put on trial in Russian-occupied Crimea for studying the Bible

It is five years since Russia’s Supreme Court outlawed the Jehovah’s Witnesses, claiming that this world faith is ‘extremist’. As well as persecuting a huge number of believers at home, Russia has also passed long sentences against four Ukrainian Jehovah’s Witnesses from occupied Crimea and has just begun the ‘trials’ of a further seven people. All are accused of organizing and / or financing so-called ‘extremist activities’, with this otherwise known as reading and studying the Bible and sharing their faith with others.

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25.04.2022 – An appeal in Vladivostok upheld the sentence of two Believers from Luchegorsk—a six-year suspended sentence for practicing faith in God

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/251437.html>

On April 21, 2022, the Primorskiy Regional Court in Vladivostok approved the verdict against Yuriy Belosludtsev and Sergey Sergeyev from Luchegorsk. A panel of judges chaired by Yevgeniy Oleshchenko found the believers guilty of practicing the religion of Jehovah’s Witnesses, interpreting this as extremism.

The lower court sentenced civilians to 6 years of suspended sentence with a probationary period of 5 years and restriction of freedom for 1 year and 9 months.

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21.04.2022 – A court imposed a large fine on Aleksey Smelov, a resident of Karelia, for believing in Jehovah God

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/211553.html>

On April 21, 2022, the judge of the Kondopozhskiy city court, Aleksandr Ivanov, found Aleksey Smelov guilty of organizing the activities of an extremist organization only because of his religious beliefs and sentenced him to a fine of 400 thousand rubles.

The verdict has not yet entered into force and can be appealed. The believer insists on his complete innocence. Although there is not a single victim in the case, the prosecutor asked the court to impose a fine of 500 thousand rubles on Smelov.

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21.04.2022 – Vladimir Skachidub's verdict of four-years-and-two months in prison for believing in Jehovah God was upheld despite an appeal filed in Krasnodar

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/211533.html>

On April 20, 2022, the Krasnodar Regional Court upheld the sentence of Vladimir Skachidub, a 60-year-old Jehovah's Witness from the village of Kholm'skaya. The believer will have to spend more than 4 years behind bars.

On October 11, 2021, the judge of the Pavlovskiy District Court of the Krasnodar Territory, Olga Marchenko, convicted Vladimir Skachidub under two extremist articles, finding him guilty of participation in the activities of a banned organization and involvement in it.

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20.04.2022 – Neftekumsk-Based Jehovah's Witnesses convicted for reading the Bible: one received a seven-and-a-half year prison sentence, the other two received hefty fines

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/200905.html>

On April 19, 2022, Maksim Mazikin, judge of the Neftekumsk District Court of the Stavropol Territory, sentenced Konstantin Samsonov to 7.5 years in prison, he was arrested in the courthouse. Aleksandr Akopov and Shamil Sultanov each received a fine of 500,000 rubles, which has already been paid off on account of the time

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19.04.2022 – Jehovah's Witnesses' homes were searched in Mari El, including the home of an 83-year-old woman. One believer was arrested

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/191328.html>

On April 15, 2022, nine dwellings of Jehovah's Witnesses from Yoshkar-Ola and the village of Silikatny (Mari El), as well as in Nizhny Novgorod, were searched. They affected at least 15 people, including an 83-year-old woman. The security forces detained 39-year-old Yevgeniy Plotnikov. He was sent to a detention center.

Searches of peaceful believers began in the morning and lasted from 6 to 8 hours. The security forces were looking for "extremist literature and computer and other equipment, through which communication was carried out with unidentified persons during worship.

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18.04.2022 – Astrakhan Regional Court Affirms an Unprecedented Six-Year Prison Sentence for Anna Safronova – One of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/180926.html>

On April 14, 2022, the Astrakhan Regional Court, by an appeal decision, approved the sentence of Anna Safronova, 56,–6 years of real imprisonment. The panel of judges, chaired by Nikolay Marevskiy, considered the discussion of the Bible and the collection of funds to help fellow believers extremism.

Thus, the record-breaking sentence for female Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia came into force. The believer still insists on her innocence. She has the right to appeal the verdict in cassation.

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18.04.2022 – Seversk-based Sergey Belousov was given a three-year suspended sentence for attending peaceful worship services of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian: <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/180915.html>

On April 14, 2022, the Severskiy City Court of the Tomsk Region sentenced Sergey Belousov to three years suspended sentence. Despite the recent clarification of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, Judge Yekaterina Soldatenko found the believer guilty of extremism only for participating in peaceful worship.

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18.04.2022 – An Ussuriysk court sentenced 47-year-old

vitaliy Ilinykh to a two-and-a-half year probation for believing in Jehovah God

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://www.jw-russia.org/news/2022/04/180908.html>

On April 15, 2022, Anna Zakharova, judge of the Ussuriysky District Court of Primorsky Krai, found Vitaly Ilinykh guilty of participating in the activities of an extremist organization and sentenced him to 2.5 years of probation for religious beliefs (the text has been updated, previously it was reported about a suspended sentence of 2 years) .

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