

RUSSIA: Jehovah's Witnesses in Mordovia threatened with abolition

SOVA Center (08.12.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2hlZjPB> – The local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses has again been found guilty under article 20.29 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Law.

On 8 December 2016 the Ministry of Internal Affairs [MVD] for the republic of Mordovia reported that a court has fined a local religious organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Saransk 150,000 rubles for possession of extremist materials for the purpose of mass distribution (art. 20.29 of Code of Administrative Violations of Law). The decision was made by the Lenin district court of Saransk.

The ministry stated that personnel of the Center for Combating Extremism of the republican MVD discovered forbidden literature in the possession of Jehovah's Witnesses and also publications in which an expert analysis that was conducted later found signs of extremism. It is known that an operational activity was conducted on 13 October 2016 in a house of worship of Jehovah's Witnesses in Saransk. The believers maintained at that time that the forbidden materials were planted on them.

Back in 2016, a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Saransk was fined 100,000 rubles on the basis of article 20.29 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Law and then it received a prosecutorial warning about the impermissibility of extremist activity. If the new decision of the court is not successfully challenged, it may become the basis for liquidation of the local religious organization.

We consider bans on the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses as

extremist and prosecution of believers for its distribution to be illegal. Such actions by the authorities we regard as religious discrimination.

Sources: MVD website for republic of Mordovia, 8 December 2016; Website of Lenin district court of Saransk, 8 December 2016.

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