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## **RUSSIA: Prosecutions of religious organisations and believers**

– Sova Center (14.02.2020) – <https://bit.ly/38cc0KI> – Three Jehovah's Witnesses were sentenced in January.

The Nadezhdinsky District Court of Primorsky Krai found Grigory Bubnov (born in 1965) guilty of organizing the activities of an extremist organization (Article 282.2 Part 1 of the Criminal Code) and issued a suspended sentence of five years (or six, according to other sources) with a five-year ban on participating in public organizations and restriction of freedom for a year.

The Polar District Court of the Murmansk Region sentenced Viktor Trofimov and Roman Markin under the same article to a fine of 350 and 300 thousand rubles, respectively.

In Karpinsk of the Sverdlovsk Region, Alexander Pryanikov,

Venera Dulova and Darya Dulova were sentenced to two and a half, two and one year of imprisonment respectively under Article 282.2 Part 2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization).

Meanwhile, the Promyshlenny District Court of Orenburg returned to the prosecutor the case of six Jehovah's Witnesses (Sergey Logunov, Vladimir Kochnev, Nikolai Zhugin, Alexei Matveev and Pavel Lekontsev). Charges against them were brought under different parts of Articles 282.2 and 282.3 of the Criminal Code. According to the court, the prosecution failed to indicate the motives and objectives of their crimes, and the actions imputed to Logunov were not described in sufficient detail.

In Kamchatka Krai, however, a similar lower court decision was overturned by the regional court. The case of Konstantin and Snezhana Bazhenov, as well as of Vera Zolotova was returned to the Yelizovsky District Court for consideration on the merits. Eight new cases opened against Jehovah's Witnesses were reported in January.

In early January, we learned about a case initiated under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code in Nevinnomyssk of Stavropol Krai; Sergey Kuznetsov, Rimma Vaschenko, Anatoly Boyko, Georgy and Tatyana Parfentiev, Evgeniya Akhrameeva, Nadezhda Konkova, Karina Saakian and another person, whose name we do not know, became the suspects in this case.

A little later, a similar criminal case against three people was opened in Georgievsk of the same region. Defendant Viktor Zimovsky, has been arrested.

In Achinsk of Krasnoyarsk Krai, a case under Article 282.2 Part 1 of the Criminal Code was opened against Viktor Sagin. In Murmansk, a case under the same article was brought against Vitaly Omelchenko; he was put under a ban on certain activities.

Another case was initiated under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code in Kazan. Lyaysan Bochkareva and Tatyana Obizhestvit were placed under house arrest, and Andrei Bochkarev was put in pre-trial detention.

In Kemerovo, Sergei Yavushkin and Alexander Bondarchuk, previously charged with participating in the activities of an extremist organization (Article 282.2 part 2 of the Criminal Code), now face additional charges under Article 282.3 Part 1

of the Criminal Code.

Two new suspects under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code – Alexander Vospitaniuk and Andrei Ryshkov – were charged in Kursk; the latter was arrested.

A criminal case under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code against Gennady Polyakevich and Gennady Skutelets was opened in late January in Pechora of the Komi Republic. The former was placed in pre-trial detention, the latter – under house arrest.

Dmitry Vinogradov, a Jehovah's Witness from Chelyabinsk, was charged under Article 282.2 Part 2 of the Criminal Code.

In mid-January, the Central District Military Court sentenced Arthur Valov and Niyaz Ziyattinov to 12 years in a maximum-security penal colony under Article 205.1 part 1.1 of the Criminal Code (financing of terrorism) and Article 205.5 Part 2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of a terrorist organization). According to the investigation (whose opinion was upheld by the court), Valov and Ziyattinov, arrested in April 2018, had participated in the activities of the radical Islamic party Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has been recognized as terrorist in Russia. They studied religious literature, recruited new supporters and held joint meetings. In addition, they made monetary contributions to support printing of literature and conducting meetings, as well as donated money to help those arrested on similar charges. We believe that prosecutions against Hizb ut-Tahrir members under anti-terrorist articles based solely on their party activities (holding meetings, reading literature etc.) are inappropriate. We also learned in early January, that Abdulhamid Shakirzianov, the Imam of the Cathedral Mosque, was fined two thousand rubles under Article 20.29 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (mass distribution of extremist materials) in court in December. The administrative prosecution against Shakirzianov was based on the results of an audit by the Novosibirsk Prosecutor's Office, which found in the mosque's bookstore the following texts included on the Federal List of Extremist Materials: Women in Islam VS Women in the Judeo-Christian Tradition (Entry No. 3346 of the List), The Gardens of the Righteous by Muhyiddin an-Nawawi (Entry No 4645) and Piety and Fear of God (Entry No. 4153). In our opinion, all three books were banned inappropriately. As

we wrote earlier, Yelchin Gadzhiev, the owner of the Novosibirsk mosque bookstore, was also fined in December for distributing two of these books.

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