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# **RUSSIA: Recent cases of persecution of Muslims for the exercise of their religious freedom**

## **Recent cases of persecution of Muslims**

**A court in Ufa fined the imam for storing two copies of comments to hadiths**

Sova-Center (05.06.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3NYgfKs> – On May 26, 2022, the Leninsky District Court of Ufa fined the imam of the

religious group “Mahalla Consent-Rizo” Shamsiddin Sizhaev two thousand rubles under Art. 20.29 of the Administrative Code (storage of extremist materials for mass distribution).

The FSB of the Republic of Bashkortostan found two copies of the book “40 Hadiths of Imam Al-Nawawi” in the prayer room of a religious group (comments and explanations: Dr. Mustafa al-Buga, Muhiyi-d-Din Mistou). The fact that the books were lying in a prayer room with free entrance, from the point of view of law enforcement agencies, testified to their mass distribution and storage for mass distribution.

Comments on 40 hadiths of al-Nawawi were banned as part of 68 Islamic religious materials in 2012 in Orenburg, but in 2015 this ban was lifted. Nevertheless, back in May 2012, the Sol-Iletsk District Court of the Orenburg Region also recognized this book as extremist along with a number of other religious works seized during searches in the case of organizing a cell of the banned organization “Tabligi Jamaat” in Sol-Iletsk. After that, the book was included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials under number 1622 (recall that the collection of al-Navawi hadiths itself was banned in 2014 by the Nevyansk District Court of the Sverdlovsk Region and in 2018 entered the Federal List under number 4673).

In our view, there was no reason to prohibit these comments on the well-known collection of hadiths, as they do not contain any incitement or signs of incitement to hatred on religious grounds. Accordingly, we believe that Sizhaev was punished inappropriately.

We also oppose the prohibitions (and numerous attempts to ban) of collections of hadiths. As we have repeatedly pointed out, today’s notions of tolerance do not apply to medieval Islamic literature, as it describes the era of religious wars and attitudes of the times of this era. It is obviously impossible

to rewrite the early history of Islam and the ideology of its founder, the prophet Muhammad, recorded by religious tradition in a certain form, and, equally, it is impossible to hide this layer from modern Russian Muslims.

### **Four new cases of followers of the Turkish theologian Said Nursi have been opened in Dagestan**

Sova Center (31.05.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3Mqhvop> – On May 31, 2022, the Investigative Department of the Investigative Committee for the Republic of Dagestan initiated criminal cases against four Said Nursi followers under Part 2 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization) on involvement in the banned international religious association “Nurjular”.

According to the UK, the suspects took part in the activities of Nurjular from 2008 to April 2017.

In March, three similar cases had been initiated against the residents of Dagestan; in May the approved indictments in these cases were sent to court. Similar cases were also initiated in January and April. It is worth noting that in 2021 one of the courts of the republic terminated a number of cases against alleged participants of Nurdzhular, accused under Part 2 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code.

We consider the Nurjular ban illegal. Recognition of his extremist organization in 2008 was the result of unreasonable prohibitions of the books of the Turkish temperate Islamic theologian Said Nursi – for promoting the superiority of Islam over other religions. In 2018 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that by prohibiting these books, Russian courts violated Art. 10 of the European Convention guaranteeing freedom of expression. We also believe that Russian Muslims

studying Nursi's legacy do not constitute a single organization. Nevertheless, the Nurjular association is banned in Russia as an extremist organization, as a result of which Muslims reading and discussing Nursi's books are prosecuted.

### **In Nizhny Tagil, the imam was fined for distributing extremist literature**

Sova-Center (13.05.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3QfeXg6> – *On May 12, 2022, it became known that back in April, the Tagilstroyevsky District Court of Nizhny Tagil fined the imam of the mosque "Makhal" Fanis Galeev (in some sources – Galiev) under Art. 20.29 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation (distribution of extremist materials).*

An inspection conducted by the prosecutor's office found 23 books included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials.

According to Galeev himself, he collected these books to study and then destroy: "There is a fine line. Today these are not extremist books, and tomorrow they are already extremist. This can be determined by a spiritual person, not secular. These books that have been discovered cannot just be thrown away. They need to be buried or burned."

The imam is a member of the Lower Tagil Council for Combating Extremism.

It is not known which books we are talking about, but we note that we consider many cases of banning Islamic literature illegal.

### **In Dzhankoy, an imam was fined for "illegal" missionary work**

Sova Center (13.05.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3mjhhET> – *On May 12, 2022, it became known that the Dzhankoy Magistrate’s Court under Part 4 of Art. 5.26 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation (carriagement of missionary activities in violation of the requirements of the legislation on freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and religious associations) fined Imam Emir Medzhitov 20 thousand rubles.*

The offense, according to the court, was that Medzhitov “*carried out religious activities without being a member or head of a religious organization, and also did not have a document confirming the authority to carry out missionary activities.*”

As the parishioners of this mosque testified at the trial, the Friday prayer was held by different believers, as it is the duty of every Muslim.

**[Further reading about FORB in Russia on HRWF website](#)**

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