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RUSSIA: Religious freedom and issues – Bimonthly Digest (01–15.12.2022)

Religious freedom and issues – Bimonthly Digest (01–15.12.2022)

14.12.2022 – Ukraine handed over to the Russian Federation the rector of the Lisichansky Cathedral, convicted for transferring information about the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the Russians

Strana.today – Ukraine handed over to the Russian Federation the rector of the Lisichansky Cathedral, the priest Andriy

Pavlenko . The video with him is published by the Russian media.

The priest was imprisoned for 8 months and a week ago he was sentenced to 12 years in prison for treason (he was accused of passing information about the Armed Forces of Ukraine to the Russians).

The Russian Federation claims that the exchange took place “thanks to the efforts of PMC” Wagner “.

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13.12.2022 – Sentence passed in Murmansk for statements against representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church

Sova Center – On November 30, 2022, the Leninsky District Court of Murmansk delivered a sentence under Part 2 of Art. 280 of the Criminal Code (public calls for extremist activity) to a 44-year-old resident of the city.

According to the court, on November 30, 2019, he wrote a statement from his account on one of the social networks “containing a call for the implementation of hostile, violent, aggressive actions against” representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC).

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12.12.2022 – Prosecutors reach the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, seeking the annulment of a rare acquittal of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian : <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/12/121611.html>

The case will be heard by the Judicial Board for Criminal

Cases of the Russian Supreme Court. This Court will deal with the direct consequences of its own decision to liquidate and ban all Jehovah's Witnesses organizations in Russia, handed down in 2017.

On December 15, 2022, three residents of Kamchatka, who profess the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses, will appear before the Criminal Collegium of the Supreme Court of Russia. Spouses-teachers and a pensioner were found guilty of participation in the activities of a banned organization, but were acquitted by the Kamchatka Regional Court. The prosecutor's office filed for a verdict of acquittal for the second cassation submission.

Continue reading...

09.12.2022 – State Duma deputy wants to develop another law on healers

Sova center – On December 2, 2022, the head of the State Duma Committee on Family Affairs, Nina Ostanina (KPRF), announced her intention to prepare a bill on criminal liability for fraudulent healers.

"We have a law on healing activity, nothing needs to be adopted. As far as punishment is concerned, this is my initiative. Too many divorced all kinds of scammers who, starting with the fact that people are left without apartments, money, but also cause irreparable damage to health , "she said.

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08.12.2022 – The cassation instance reduced the term of imprisonment for a follower of Said Nursi

Sova center – Ilgar Aliyev was released. He was deprived of Russian citizenship and is going to be deported to Azerbaijan.

On November 22, 2022, the Fifth Court of Cassation of General Jurisdiction reduced by two years the term of imprisonment of a follower of the Turkish theologian Said Nursi, Ilgar Aliyev, who was convicted in 2018 under CC. 1 and 1.1 Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organization of the activities of an extremist organization and involvement in its activities), excluding part 1.1 from the verdict.

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07.12.2022 – In the Khabarovsk Territory, they fined for preaching and are going to expel a US citizen from the country

Sova Center – On December 7, 2022, it became known that in the Sovetsko-Gavansky district of the Khabarovsk Territory, a court found a US citizen guilty under Part 2 of Art. 18.8 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (violation by a foreign citizen or stateless person of the rules for entry into the Russian Federation or the regime of stay (residence) in the Russian Federation) and declared his stay in Russia illegal. He was fined two thousand rubles and will be expelled from the country.

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07.12.2022 – In the Shadow of Russia: Jehovah's Witnesses and Central Asia

Bitter Winter – On December 2, 2022, CESNUR, the Center of Studies on New Religions, organized an international webinar on the theme “In the Shadow of Russia: Jehovah's Witnesses and Religious Freedom in Central Asia.”

Central Asia is an area once part of the Soviet Union that includes five countries, with a total population of 73 million. Uzbekistan accounts for almost half of the population (33 million). The largest and richest (because of oil and gas) of the five countries, Kazakhstan, is as large as all Western Europe, and has a population of 19 million. Follow Tajikistan, approaching 10 million, and Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, with 6.5 million each.

Continue reading...

07.12.2022 – Chelyabinsk resident Vadim Gizatulin received a suspended sentence for his faith. The court considered extremism the discussion of the Bible and prayers to Jehovah God

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/12/071526.html>

On December 7, 2022, the judge of the Metallurgical District Court of the city of Chelyabinsk, Vitaly Sirotin, found Vadim Gizatulin guilty of participating in extremist activities. The court sentenced an electrician who professes the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses to a suspended sentence of 2 years in prison.

The verdict has not entered into force and can be appealed.

Vadim Gizatulin faced persecution for his faith in February 2018. Then the security forces of the Chelyabinsk region initiated operational-search activities against local believers. A year later, Gizatulin was searched as part of the Vladimir Suvorov case, in which he was a witness. Vadim himself became a defendant in a criminal case in August 2021. After 2 months, they came to the believer with a second search. Since July 2022, Gizatulin has been under house arrest.

Continue reading...

05.12.2022 – An appeal in Nizhny Novgorod upheld another guilty verdict for faith. Maksim Zavrashnov, 41, was sentenced to six years suspended sentence

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/12/051531.html>

On December 5, 2022, the Nizhny Novgorod Regional Court approved the sentence to Maksim Zavrashnov—6 years suspended sentence for reading the Bible. The believer still insists on his innocence and has the right to appeal this decision in the cassation procedure.

Maksim Zavrashnov never denied that he was a Jehovah's Witness and together with his friends he read the Bible and prayed to God. In court, he stressed: "My goal was not to continue the activities of the liquidated legal entity, but to worship God."

Continue reading...

05.12.2022 – The Cassation Court sent the case of Yelena Menchikova from Cherkessk for a new trial.

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/12/051450.html>

On December 5, 2022, the Fifth Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction in the city of Pyatigorsk overturned the verdict and the appeal ruling in the case of 58-year-old Yelena Menchikova, who is disabled, and sent her case for a new trial before other judges.

The believer's sentence was announced in December 2021. Two

months later, the appellate court confirmed her sentence, but waived her court costs.

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02.12.2022 – In Armyansk two believers were sentenced to six years in prison.

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/12/021730.html>

On December 1, 2022, Tatyana Fedeneva, judge of the Armyansk City Court of the Republic of Crimea, found Aleksandr Litvinyuk and Aleksandr Dubovenko guilty of extremism and sentenced them to 6 years in a penal colony– exactly what the prosecutor requested for them. The believers were taken into custody in the courtroom.

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01.12.2022 – Sergey Polyakov, one of Jehovah's Witnesses from Omsk, was released.

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/11/301613.html>

On November 30, 2022, Sergei Polyakov's sentence ended and he was released. The believer fully served the appointed term of imprisonment – 3 years, of which he actually spent about 1.5 years in the colony.

In November 2020, a district court found Polyakov guilty of extremism because of his religion. After an appeal confirmed the verdict in May 2021, Sergey was transferred to Valdai, which is 3,000 kilometers from his hometown. The journey took almost 2 months, and in August he arrived at correctional

colony No. 4 in the city of Valdai.

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