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RUSSIA: Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest March 01-15

Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest March 01 -15

15.03.2023 – The Supreme Court overturned the acquittal of three Jehovah's Witnesses from Karpinsk

Sova Center – On March 14, 2023, the Supreme Court of Russia overturned the acquittal of **Alexander Pryanikov, Venera and**

Daria Dulov. Their case under Part 2 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization) was sent for reconsideration to the appellate instance.

Recall that the case of Pryanikov and the Dulovs was initiated in the summer of 2018. In January 2020, they were given suspended sentences for the first time, but in August of the same year, the Sverdlovsk Regional Court overturned the sentence and sent the case back for a new trial.

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14.03.2023 – Now 12 jailed Crimean prisoners of conscience

Forum 18 – **Aleksandr Litvinyuk** is not due to complete his jail term and post-prison restrictions until the mid-2030s, by which time he would be over 75. Armyansk Prosecutor's Office refused to put Forum 18 through to Prosecutor Minigul Saddykova, who led the prosecution case in court. Litvinyuk is among 12 Jehovah's Witnesses from Russian-occupied Crimea now jailed for at least six years to punish their exercise of freedom of religion or belief. Two more are serving suspended sentences including **Darya Kuzio**, wife of one of the prisoners.

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14.03.2023 – A Jehovah's Witness living in Stavropol is being persecuted under Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code in the KChR

Sova center – On March 3, 2023, the home of Jehovah's Witness Alexei Pasyukov was searched in Stavropol. Earlier, on December 8, 2022, he became a suspect under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organization of the activities of an extremist organization). The case is being

investigated by the Zelenchuk Interdistrict Investigation Department of the Investigation Department of the Investigative Committee for Karachay-Cherkessia.

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13.03.2023 – Sentence passed on followers of Said Nursi from Naberezhnye Chelny

Sova Center – On March 13, 2023, the Naberezhnye Chelny City Court sentenced local residents **Khunar Agaev, Aidar Sageev and Amrakh Akhmedov**, finding them guilty of involvement in the banned religious association Nurcular.

The court appointed Agaev and Sageev two and a half years in a general regime colony under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organization of the activities of an extremist organization), in Akhmedova – a year and a half of imprisonment under part 2 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization).

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09.03.2023 – The Court of Cassation upheld the verdict convicting four believers from Chita. Three will spend from 6 to 6.5 years in penal colonies

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/091402.html>

On March 7, 2023, the Eighth Court of Cassation of General Jurisdiction in Kemerovo confirmed the verdict and the appeal ruling against four Chita residents for their faith, as final. The court hearing was held via videoconferencing.

The court of first instance convicted **Vladimir Ermolaev, Aleksandr Putintsev, Igor Mamalimov and Sergey Kirilyuk** of extremism for their peaceful religious beliefs on June 6, 2022, and on September 20 of the same year, the court of appeal upheld this decision. All convicts are already detained in penal colonies, except Sergey Kirilyuk, who was given a 6-year suspended sentence.

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07.03.2023 – Case of Jehovah's Witness from Orel brought to court

Sova Center – **Tatyana Piskareva** is accused of participating in the activities of a banned community.

On March 7, 2023, the Investigative Committee of the Investigative Committee for the Oryol Region announced that the case had been transferred to court under Part 2 of Art. 282 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization) against a 66-year-old Jehovah's Witness. Obviously, we are talking about **Tatyana Piskareva**.

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07.03.2023 – Criminal case initiated against Jehovah's Witnesses in Vladivostok

Sova Center – Two believers were sent to a pre-trial detention center, another one was placed under house arrest, one was placed under a ban on certain actions, and a written undertaking not to leave was taken from six more.

On March 5, 2023, as part of the investigation of a criminal case under all three parts of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organizing the activities of an extremist organization,

involving others in its activities and participation in such activities), searches were carried out against Jehovah's Witnesses at ten addresses in Vladivostok. According to the Investigative Committee, a written undertaking not to leave was taken from six people, and they wanted to send four more into custody.

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06.03.2023 – Court of Appeal in Chelyabinsk upheld the verdict against Andrey Perminov, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Disabled person will serve a 6-year suspended sentence

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/060938.html>

On March 3, 2023, the Chelyabinsk Regional Court upheld the verdict against **Andrey Perminov** who is disabled – a 6-year suspended sentence. Judge Marina Klyushina agreed with the ruling of the court of first instance to deem peaceful religious services and discussions of the Bible to be extremism.

The verdict has entered into force. Although the legislation of the Russian Federation does not classify the dissemination and practice of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses as extremism, the courts interpreted the believer's actions as organizing the activity of an extremist organization. The prosecutor's office found the ruling of the court of first instance to be too lenient and appealed it.

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03.03.2023 – The Khabarovsk Regional Court considered the appeal of a Jehovah's Witness

Sova center – On March 1, 2023, the Khabarovsk Regional Court considered an appeal in the case of Jehovah's Witness Egor Baranov. Earlier, on June 6, 2022, the Vyazemsky District Court of the Khabarovsk Territory sentenced Baranov to five years of suspended imprisonment, finding him guilty of CC. 1.1 and 2 Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (involvement in the activities of an extremist organization and participation in it). The regional court reduced this term by six months – up to four and a half years of suspended sentence.

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03.03.2023 – 'Court' in Russian-occupied Crimea passes long sentences against three Ukrainian Jehovah's Witnesses

khpg.org – The Russian occupation 'Yalta municipal court' has convicted four Jehovah's Witnesses of preposterous charges based solely on the Ukrainians' faith, with three men sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Instead of complying with international law which prohibits an occupying state from applying its legislation on occupied territory, Russia's religious persecution in occupied Crimea is worse even than that on Russian territory. If in Russia, 'judges' do fairly often pass suspended sentences, virtually all 'trials' in occupied Crimea have ended in terms of imprisonment of between 6 and 7 years.

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02.03.2023 – Court of Appeal in Birobidzhan upheld the verdict for Svetlana Monis. A 2.5-year suspended sentence for her faith.

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/020856.html>

On February 28, 2023, the Court of the Jewish Autonomous Region considered the case of **Svetlana Monis**, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, for the third time. The appeals panel approved the decision of the lower court: for her faith she was found guilty of participating in extremist activity and given a 2.5-year suspended sentence.

In May 2021, the Court of the Jewish Autonomous Region replaced the fine imposed on Monis with a 2.5-year suspended imprisonment. Later, the court of cassation overturned this decision. In March 2022, after a second appeal the case was returned to the Birobidzhan District Court for a new trial. This time, the court of first instance imposed a 2.5-year suspended sentence.

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