

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

# **RUSSIA: Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest March 16-31**

## **RUSSIA: Religious persecution and issues – Bimonthly digest March 16 -31**

**31.03.2023 – Jehovah's Witness sentenced to six years in prison in Kemerovo Region**

Sova Center – Sergei Ananin was convicted under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code.

On March 31, 2023, the Belovsky City Court of the Kemerovo

Region passed a sentence on Jehovah's Witness Sergei Ananin, charged under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organization of the activities of an extremist organization). He was sentenced to six years in prison to be served in a penal colony. The believer was taken into custody in the courtroom.

During the debate of the parties on March 21, the public prosecutor asked that Ananin be sentenced to eight years in prison.

[Continue reading...](#)

### **30.03.2023 – A criminal case was opened against a resident of St. Petersburg for insulting the feelings of believers**

Sova Center – On March 30, 2023, the administration of the Investigative Committee for St. Petersburg announced the initiation of a criminal case against a 43-year-old local resident under Part 1 of Art. 148 of the Criminal Code (public actions expressing clear disrespect for society and committed in order to offend the religious feelings of believers). Earlier, a case was opened against him under Part 1 of Art. 318 of the Criminal Code (use of violence against a representative of authority).

The reason for the criminal prosecution was an incident that occurred at the end of March. A Petersburg resident, moving around the city by car, stopped at a pedestrian crossing, approached another driver and, during a conversation with him, spoke negatively about "Russians" and "Christians", calling them "fascists" because of the armed actions on the territory of Ukraine. The conversation was recorded on a video recorder; on March 28, the second driver posted the recording on the Internet.

[Continue reading...](#)

## 28.03.2023 – Jehovah's Witnesses detained in Leningrad Region

Sova Center – In February 2023, as part of a new case under Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code, six suspects were detained, four of them were sent to a pre-trial detention center. In March, five more suspects appeared in the case.

On March 23, 2023, a new wave of searches took place at the homes of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kingisepp, Leningrad Region. After interrogations, five believers were detained: **Igor Shevlyuga, Miroslav Sabodash, Constance Vovk, Tatyana Stepanova and Alexander Vaganov**. According to the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves, four – Sabodash, Vovk, Stepanova and Vaganov – were ordered by the court to ban certain actions; what measure of restraint was chosen by Shevlyuge is not specified.

[Continue reading...](#)

## 27.03.2023 – Court in Sovetskaya Gavan sentenced one of Jehovah's Witnesses Aleksey Ukhov to six and a half years of real imprisonment for reading the Bible

Link to full text in Russian:  
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/271118.html>

On March 27, 2023, Victoriya Anokhina, judge of the Sovetskaya Gavan City Court of the Khabarovsk Territory, sentenced **Aleksey Ukhov** to 6.5 years in a penal colony for believing in Jehovah God. He was taken into custody in the courtroom.

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

The believer insists on his complete innocence. "I want to maintain my reputation as a person worthy of respect, who values his word, and also values the honor of being a Jehovah's Witness. For me, this is very important," said Aleksey Ukhov, addressing the court with the last word.

[Continue reading...](#)

**23.03.2023 – A second appeal in Chelyabinsk softened the sentence of Lyudmila Salikova, 71.**

Link to full text in Russian:  
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/231358.html>

On March 23, 2023, **Lyudmila Salikova** reappeared before the Chelyabinsk Regional Court, which changed her sentence, reclassifying the charge from organizing the activities of an extremist organization to participating in it and reducing her suspended sentence to 2.5 years with a probationary period of 3 years.

Lyudmila Salikova from Snezhinsk has been prosecuted for her faith since the fall of 2020. She ended up in the dock for "taking part in the religious meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, having conversations about the creeds of Jehovah's Witnesses." By such actions, according to the investigation, she organized the activities of an extremist organization. In January 2022, Lyudmila Salikova was sentenced to 6 years of suspended sentence, and the appeal upheld this decision.

[Continue reading...](#)

**22.03.2023 – ECtHR rules in favor of Baptist Ossevaarde**

Sova center – On March 7, 2023, the European Court of Human

Rights ruled in the *Ossevaarde v. Russia* case . U.S. citizen Baptist Donald Jay Ossevaarde was fined in 2016 for “illegal” missionary work.

Together with his wife, they held Bible meetings at home in Orel, without notifying government agencies about the creation of a religious group. They invited people to meetings in person or left invitations in mailboxes.

The court found in the *Ossevaarde* case a violation of Art. 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and Art. 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

[Continue reading...](#)

### **22.03.2023 – Russian Orthodox Church shares blame for ‘crimes’ in Ukraine, says ecumenical patriarch**

Radio Free Europe – The spiritual head of the world’s Orthodox Christians said on March 22 that Russia’s Orthodox Church shared responsibility for the conflict in Ukraine. “The church and the state leadership in Russia cooperated in the crime of aggression and shared the responsibility for the resulting crimes, like the shocking abduction of the Ukrainian children,” Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew said at a conference in Vilnius. The comments are a rebuke of Russian Patriarch Kirill, whose blessing for Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine has splintered the Orthodox Church. Russian authorities are using the church as an “instrument for their strategic objectives,” Bartholomew said.

[Continue reading...](#)

### **20.03.2023 – The Cassation Court in Kemerovo did not change the sentence imposed on Yevgeniy Korotun from Seversk–seven**

## years in prison for his religion

Link to full text in Russian:  
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/201434.html>

On March 16, 2023, the Eighth Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction definitively upheld the conviction of **Yevgeniy Korotun**, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In January 2022, he was sentenced to seven years in prison, and in May of the same year, this decision was upheld by the appellate court.

Yevgeniy, a 52-year-old pensioner and father of a young child, has been behind bars for a total of about two and a half years. Now he is serving his sentence in a penal colony in Nizhny Tagil.

[Continue reading...](#)

## 20.03.2023 – Russia: Pastor Moskvitin sentenced to 1.5 years in penal colony for “brainwashing”

Bitter winter – On March 12, 2023, the Kirovsky District Court of Omsk, Russia, sentenced **Pastor Stanislav Moskvitin** to one and a half years to be spent in a penal colony. Moskvitin had been arrested on July 18, 2021. He is the pastor of the Apostolic Center Church “New Creation,” which is part of the Russian Council of Christian Evangelical Churches.

[Continue reading...](#)

## 18.03.2023 – How religious freedom is eroding amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Christian post – Russia's persecution of religious groups has worsened during the war with Ukraine, according to experts who testified before the United States' top religious freedom

advisory commission this week.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom hosted a virtual hearing to analyze Russia's religious freedom violations and recommend policy solutions. The commission is responsible for advising the U.S. Congress and the State Department about religious freedom across the globe.

[Continue reading...](#)

### **18.03.2023 -Two criminal trials to resume in April**

Forum 18 – The criminal trial of Tomsk musician Anna Chagina on charges of again “discrediting” the Armed Forces resumes on 11 April. She was fined in 2022 for a poster reading “Blessed are the peacemakers”. “Many times after [the arrest for the poster], I inwardly turned to these words of Christ and realised that peacemaking begins with what is in a person's heart,” Chagina says. In St Petersburg, Fr Ioann Kurmoyarov's trial resumes on 10 April. He says he has been denied medical attention in prison, including from a cardiologist. New penalties for “false information” and “discreditation”, also applying these actions to criticism of mercenaries, are due to come into force on 28 March.

[Continue reading...](#)

### **17.03.2023 – The Court sentenced Yuriy Yakovlev, a 56-year-old Jehovah's Witness from Sosnovoborsk, to 6 years and 2 months in a penal colony**

Link to full text in Russian:  
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2023/03/171510.html>

On March 17, 2023, the Sosnovoborsk City Court of the

Krasnoyarsk Territory found Yuriy Yakovlev guilty of extremism for holding peaceful religious services online. The verdict can be appealed.

In March 2022, a criminal case was initiated against the believer, and his house was searched. After that, **Yuriy Yakovlev** was placed in a pre-trial detention center, where remains until now. Shortly before the start of the prosecution, his elderly mother, who needed care, moved in with the believer. After her son's arrest, her condition deteriorated.

[Continue reading...](#)

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269