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## **RUSSIA: Several cases in courts for 'illegal' missionary work**

### **Several cases in courts for 'illegal' missionary work**

By Willy Fautré

HRWF with SOVA CENTER (18.03.2022) – Several religious leaders and communities are currently prosecuted for 'illegal' missionary work on the basis of Art. 5.26, Part 3, of the Administrative Code (implementation of activities by a religious organization without specifying its official full

name, including the publication or distribution of literature with incomplete or knowingly false markings within the framework of missionary activities).

On 10 March 2022, the Prokhladnensky District Court of Kabardino-Balkaria found Timofey Boronin, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, guilty of 'illegal' missionary work and fined him 30,000 rubles.

The court decision states that "in 2021, near the Azbuka Flower store in Prokhladny, Timofey Boronin distributed, as part of missionary activities, religious literature to citizens that is not marked with the name of this organization in order to involve them in this structure." The pastor pleaded not guilty and intends to appeal this decision.

Earlier, the owner of this store Nina Boronina was fined for a similar offense. The community has also already been fined.

This is also the case for the Evangelical Church "Teign of Faith", in the Samara region, but on 17 February, the church appealed to the Sixth Court of Cassation of General Jurisdiction.

This is the case as well for an Adventist Church in Kaspiysk (Republic of Dagestan), located on the Caspian Sea. The religious organization has appealed this decision.

On 18 February 2022, the Magistrate's Court of Judicial Precinct No. 31 of the Belogorsky Judicial District of the Republic of Crimea recognized L. Palyokha guilty of "illegal" missionary activities under Art. 5.26, Part 4 of the Administrative Code and fined it 7000 rubles.

The court considered that "by disseminating information about her faith to persons who are not members (followers) of her religious association, and without having a decision of the general meeting of the religious group to grant it appropriate powers," she had carried out illegal missionary activities.

On 16 February 2022, the Tutaevsky City Court of the Yaroslavl Region found Umejon Toshev, a citizen of Tajikistan, guilty under Art. 5.26, Part 5 of the Administrative Code (illegal missionary work). The court fined him 30,000 rubles with administrative expulsion from Russia.

The court concluded that Toshev, a foreign citizen, prayed and delivered a sermon without being a leader, a member of a collegial body or a priest of a religious organization, which constitutes the offence of 'illegal missionary work'.

(\* ) 1000 rubles – 10 dollars

### ***A Tablighi Jamaat Muslim sentenced to 2 years in prison***

In addition to severe restrictions to freedom of expression and missionary activities, members of banned peaceful, but so-called extremist, religious movements continue to be arrested and sentenced to prison terms for practicing their faith.

On March 16, 2022, it became known that the court in Saratov sentenced a 51-year-old local resident to two years in a general regime colony with restriction of liberty for a period of eight months under Part 2 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization) for involvement in the banned religious association Tablighi Jamaat.

The case was initiated in April 2021. Representatives of the IC stated that the accused "positioned himself" as a supporter of Tablighi Jamaat, "directly organized and personally took part in regular meetings, during which extremist ideology was promoted among residents of the Saratov region, conducted explanatory work".

The Tablighi Jamaat religious movement was banned in Russia in 2009, without proper grounds in the opinion of SOVA Center in

Moscow. This association was engaged in the propaganda of fundamentalist Islam, but was not noticed in any calls for violence, and therefore the persecution of its supporters is unjustified, according to SOVA Center.

### **Further reading about FORB in Russia on HRWF website**

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