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RUSSIA : Freedom of religion or belief : Special bimonthly FORB digest (01-15.08.2021)

Russia : Special bimonthly FORB digest (01-15.08.2021)

13.08.21 – Court in Krasnodar Territory sentenced 60-year-old Vasiliy Meleshko to 3 years in prison for talking about the Bible

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/08/131020.html>

The judge of the Abinsky District Court, Mikhail Ostashevskiy, considered the case of Vasiliy Meleshko in just two sessions and on August 11, 2021, sentenced him to 3 years in a general regime colony, considering his peaceful religious activities to be extremist. The believer was arrested and handcuffed to the pre-trial detention center of Novorossiysk.

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12.08.21 – The Moscow Patriarchate’s Constitution: How the Russian Orthodox church champions the Kremlin’s battle against “falsification”

Russia’s 2020 constitutional amendments provide fresh succor for the Kremlin’s longstanding foreign policy priorities. These priorities include fortifying a muscular vision of sovereignty, non-interference, and a multipolar international order; disseminating “traditional values;” defending rights of compatriots living abroad; and cracking down on the so-called “falsification” of Russia’s WWII history that tarnishes the country’s reputation.

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11.08.21 – Sevastopol City Court upholds verdict on Jehovah’s witness sentenced to 6.5 years in penal colony

Link to full text in Russian: <https://credo.press/238548/>

A Sevastopol city court declined on 10 August to grant an appeal from the Jehovah’s Witness Viktor Stashevsky against the verdict in his case. The panel of judges agreed that his religious activity is criminal; the believer will have to serve 6.5 years in a penal colony of medium security, a correspondent for the Credo.Press portal reports, citing sources among Russian adherents of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

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11.08.21 – Sentence of Jehovah’s witness Viktor Stashevsky

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Link to full text in Russian: <https://cutt.ly/BQCzXs3>

A panel of a Sevastopol city court, including Judge Vasily Arkhimov, left in force the verdict of the court of first instance in the case of Viktor Stashevsky, who was sentenced to six and a half years for arranging the activity of a religious association of Jehovah's Witnesses, who are forbidden in the Russian Federation. This was reported by a Krymskii Protsess correspondent from the Sevastopol city courthouse.

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11.08.21 – Russia prosecutes head of a Ukrainian Orthodox Monastery in occupied Crimea for 'unlawful missionary activities'

Masked law enforcement officers carried out mass raids on the Jehovah's Witnesses across Russia on Tuesday and made a number of arrests as part of a new criminal case against the group, the Investigative Committee said.

The law enforcement agency said it had opened an investigation as it suspected the Christian denomination was organising the activity in Moscow of its national centre and affiliates.

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10.08.21 – New arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses, and record sentence upheld in Russian-occupied Crimea

A Russian-controlled 'court' in occupied Crimea has upheld the appalling 6.5-year sentence passed on Viktor Stashevsky. The news comes a week after the FSB in occupied Yalta launched new criminal proceedings against two Jehovah's Witnesses, including **Darya Kuzio**, whose husband, **Taras Kuzio** was arrested in March this year. The three, and many other believers, face imprisonment, essentially for praying and sharing their faith

with others.

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09.08.21 – Ukraine ombudsperson calls out Russia’s violations of religious rights in occupied Crimea

Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights Liudmyla Denisova has called on the international community to increase diplomatic and sanctions pressure on the Russian Federation and to condemn actions violating the rights of the faithful with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) in the temporarily occupied Crimea.

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09.08.21 – “After a heart attack, I was put into a cage in handcuffs.” The story of the persecution for faith of Olga Opaleva and her son in Primorye

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/08/091601.html>

Olga Opaleva, a 69-year-old pensioner from Primorye, has been prosecuted for her faith in Jehovah for the third year. The security forces searched and detained the believer, knowing that she had a heart attack the night before. A few months later, on the way to the hearing, Olga suffered a stroke. In another city, Olga’s son, Vitaliy Ilinykh, is on trial for his convictions.

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05.08.21 – The Appeal in Yoshkar-Ola upheld the suspended sentence of 31-year-old Yekaterina Pegasheva

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/08/050821.html>

On August 4, 2021, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Mari

El rejected Ekaterina Pegasheva's appeal against the verdict. The believer was sentenced to 6.5 years probation with a probation period of 4 years for talking on spiritual topics, which the court considered "organizing the activities of a banned organization."

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05.08.21 – Rural churches rescued from common fate of soviet era

Link to full text in Russian:
<http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=77638>

The prosecutor's office of Spassky district of Tatarstan confirmed, on the basis of results of an inspection, reports to the effect that in two villages of the republic, architectural monuments had been converted into grain storehouses and cattle sheds, and submissions have been made on this matter, a senior assistant prosecutor for relations with news media of the district, Ruslan Galiev, reported.

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02.08.21 – Jehovah's Witnesses' sentences pile up in south of Russia

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://www.kavkaz-uzel.media/articles/366639/>

A court in Rostov-on-Don found Andrei Okhrimchuk guilty of participating in activity of a local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses and also of financing it. The believer intends to appeal the verdict.

As Kavkazskii Uzel has written, the independent businessman, resident of Rostov-on-Don Andrei Okhrimchuk was questioned in court in the case of the Jehovah's Witness Galina Parkova on 25 November 2020. During questioning, Okhrimchuk indicated that he also is a Jehovah's Witness and a criminal case on a

similar article was opened against him.

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02.08.21 – Security service in Blagoveshchensk relentless in pursuit of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian: <https://cutt.ly/tQCxIwE>

The directorate of the F.S.B. for Amur oblast arraigned Kristina Golik and Maria Portniagina as defendants in a criminal case about belonging to an extremist organization (part 2, article 282.2 of Criminal Code). Both women are pledged not to leave their place of residence. This was reported on 27 July by a portal devoted to the persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia.

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03.08.21 – The court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced Andrey Okhrimchuk to 4 years probation for faith in Jehovah God

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/08/030820.html>

On August 2, 2021, Olga Borokhova, judge of the Leninsky District Court of Rostov-on-Don, found 42-year-old Andrei Okhrimchuk guilty of extremism and sentenced him to 4 years of probation, as well as 1 year of restraint of freedom – the prosecutor asked for such a punishment.

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Further reading about FORB in Russia on HRWF website

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