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RUSSIA: Special bimonthly Digest on freedom of religion (16-30.04.2021)

30.04.2021 – Religious minorities increasingly face difficulties in Russia

In April 2019, the Russian authorities interrupted the Sunday service of a Baptist community in Verkhnebakansky. They accused the community of using a residential property for worship. However, under Russian law, the use of premises provided by a member is the only lawful way a religious group can meet. Vitaliy Bak, the leader of the group, seeks to remedy the violations by the Russian Federation of his right to practice his faith freely. Yet, in July, the authorities returned to seal off a large part of his house preventing any use.

Pastor Bak's final appeal in Russia was refused. With the help

of ADF International, he has now taken his case to the European Court of Human Rights alleging violations of his right to freedom of religion and assembly. The Court is yet to decide whether or not his case will be heard.

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29.04.21 – An appeal in Birobidzhan upheld the suspended sentence for Igor Tsarev, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/25.html>

On April 29, 2021, the Jewish Autonomous Region Court upheld Birobidzhan-based Igor Tsarev’s two-and-a-half-year suspended sentence with a year of the restriction of freedom and a probationary period of two years. The court determined that peaceful practicing of the faith of Jehovah’s Witnesses to be participation in the activities of a banned organization.

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29.04.21 – Crimean Pentecostals acknowledge breaking anti-evangelism law

Link to full text in Russian:
<http://article28.ru/infringement/385/>

On 8 April, a magistrate judge of judicial district No. 58 of the Krasnoperekopsk judicial district of the republic of Crimea ruled that the local religious organization “Love of Christ Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith Pentecostals” of the city of Krasnoperekopsk is guilty of committing the administrative violation of law specified in part 3 of article 526 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Law of the R.F.

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26.04.21 – Court rebuffs prosecutor’s request to imprison Jehovah’s Witnesses for very long terms

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

The Promyshlennyi district court of the city of Smolensk sentenced a resident of Smolensk to a 6-year-6-month suspended sentence; he tried to revive the activity of a regional division of the religious organization of the “Administrative Center of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia.” Three companions joined him in the defendants’ dock.

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26.04.21 – A Court in Smolensk sentenced three of Jehovah’s Witnesses to a suspended sentence of 6 to 6.5 years for

reading the Bible

Link to full text in

Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/24.html>

On April 23, 2021, the Industrial District Court of Smolensk found Valeriy Shalev, Yevgeniy Deshko and Ruslan Korolev guilty of organizing extremist activities in connection with their practice of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Instead of the imprisonment requested by the prosecutor, the believers were assigned suspended sentences.

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23.04.21 – In the Smolensk region, Mariya Troshina and Nataliya Sorokina received 6 years of suspended sentence for reading the Bible

Link to full text in

Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/23.html>

On April 22, 2021, the judge of the Sychevka District Court of the Smolensk Region, Arkadiy Likhachev, found Mariya Troshina and Nataliya Sorokina guilty of allegedly organizing the activities of an extremist organization. For their faith in Jehovah God, they were sentenced to 6 years of suspended imprisonment with a probation period of 3 years.

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23.04.21 – Baptist preacher punished for allegedly violating anti-evangelism law

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

In April 2021, a minister of the church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (EKHB) was fined for "illegal" evangelism in Obninsk. In January, unidentified persons arrived at a meeting being conducted by him in a private home; after that visit the home was visited by F.S.B. agents.

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22.04.21 – Appeal Court in Birobidzhan toughens the sentence for Yelena Reyno-Chernyshova for her faith. The fine was replaced with a suspended sentence

Link to full text in

Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/22.html>

On April 22, 2021, the court of the Jewish Autonomous Region dismissed the appeal of Yelena Reyno-Chernyshova and satisfied the appeal of the prosecutor by toughening her sentence to 2.5 years of probation and 1 year of restraint.

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20.04.21 – Jehovah’s Witnesses persecuted in 65 regions of Russia: Mass searches took place in Adygea, one sent to a pre-trial detention center

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/21.html>

On April 16, 2021, in the city of Maikop, the capital of the Republic of Adygea, searches were carried out supposedly at 5 addresses of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Several men and women were questioned. 46-year-old Inver Siyukhov was placed in a pre-trial detention center for 2 months.

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20.04.21 – The Court of Appeal toughened the verdict for faith to Larisa Artamonova from Birobidzhan. The fine is replaced with a suspended sentence

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/20.html>

On April 20, 2021, the court of the Jewish Autonomous Region, having considered the prosecutor’s submission and Larisa Artamonova’s complaint against the verdict, replaced a fine of 10,000 rubles for 2.5 years of probation and 1 year of restraint of liberty. She is condemned for believing in Jehovah God. The verdict entered into force.

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19.04.21 – Absurd misapplication of anti-evangelism law corrected

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

On 1 April 2021, the Uzlovaya city court of Tula oblast acquitted two believers who are members of the church of Christian Seventh-day Adventists, who in January 2021 were held administratively accountable (a fine of 5,000 rubles for each) for reading the Bible and praying during their worship service. This incident drew the attention of the public after publication on the internet in February of this year of an article by Oleg Goncharov, “Christian believers in Uzlovaya fined for lacking permission for reading the Bible, praying, and singing.”

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16.04.21 – Jehovah’s Witness faces longest prison term

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

A sentence of 7.5 years in a penal colony of ordinary regime was left in force for 63-year-old Jehovah’s Witness Alexander

Ivshin. OVDInfo was told this in the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses.

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16.04.21 – In Izhevsk, a series of raids took place in homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. Two people sent to jail for their faith

Link to full text in Russian:
<https://jw-russia.org/news/2021/04/19.html>

On April 14, 2021, at least 12 addresses of Jehovah's Witnesses were searched in Izhevsk (Udmurtia). 6 men between the ages of 31 and 56 were detained, two were taken into custody. The believers are accused under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (organization of extremist activities).

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