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## **RUSSIA : Special bimonthly freedom of religion or belief (01-15.09.2022)**

**RUSSIA : Special bimonthly freedom of religion or belief (01-15.09.2022)**

**14.09.2022 – In Chelyabinsk, special forces stormed the apartments of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Believer arrested.**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/09/140838.html>

On September 8, 2022, a raid on 13 houses of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Chelyabinsk took place – the security forces broke out the windows and doors of the apartments. One of the

believers, **Dmitriy Dolzhikov**, was detained and taken 1,500 kilometers away to Novosibirsk, where he was taken into custody.

The searches in the houses of the believers began in the evening and continued until midnight, and video footage was taken. Some were detained and taken away for interrogation to the Investigative Committee, while others were given summons for the next morning. These events affected about 34 people in total.

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### **14.09.2022 – Russian Supreme Court brands as terrorist, bans Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan**

Interfax – The Russian Supreme Court branded the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan as terrorist and banned its operations in Russia on Wednesday, the court's press service told *Interfax*.

"The court has upheld a motion from the Russian Prosecutor General's Office to designate the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan as terrorist and to ban its activity in the Russian territory," a court representative said.

Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov said during a working visit to Tajikistan that such a motion had been filed.

Tajikistan branded the party as terrorist and banned its operations a long time ago. It is also on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s register of terrorist organizations.

### **12.09.2022 – In the Chelyabinsk region, a new case was initiated on participation in the organization of Jehovah's**

## Witnesses

Sova Center – On September 12, 2022, the investigative department of the Investigative Committee of Russia for the Chelyabinsk Region announced that a criminal case had been initiated under Part 2 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization).

According to the Investigative Committee, since 2017 the suspect has been involved in the work of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses and studied religious literature with other participants, which, according to the investigation, contained "statements degrading human dignity on the principle of attitude towards religion and elements of propaganda of the exclusivity of one religion over another".

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## 09.09.2022 – Crimean Tatar sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges of participating in Hizb ut-Tahrir

Sova center – On September 9, 2022, the Southern District Military Court found the Crimean Tatar **Yashar Shikhametov** guilty under Part 2 of Art. 205.5 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of a terrorist organization) and sentenced him to eleven years in prison with the first four years in prison. In July, the prosecutor requested the same punishment for Shikhametov.

Shikhametov was detained in Crimea in February 2021, along with five other local residents – Leinur Seydametov, Timur Yalkabov, Azamat Eyupov, Ernest Ibragimov and Oleg Fedorov. All of them were charged with involvement in the Islamic radical party Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is recognized as a terrorist organization in Russia.

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**08.09.2022 – The researchers conclude that the Russian military often intentionally destroys churches and religious buildings**

Risu – The Academic Religious Studies Workshop initiated the “Religion in Fire” project, which was supported by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience and the Congress of National Communities of Ukraine.

One of the authors, Karen Nikiforov, spoke about the project with “Vechirniy Kyiv” (“Evening Kyiv”). Nikiforov is the head of the theology, religious studies and history of religion section of the Kyiv Small Academy of Sciences and a member of the expert commission of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on history.

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**08.09.2022 – Church-State cooperation and its impact on freedom of religion or belief and on gender issues in Russia**

Risu – The cooperation between the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church has many legal implications. One such implication is that the ethical teachings of the Church exert influence on state policies in matters such as sexuality, gender, and family. This influence is one of this article’s main areas of focus. The Church’s teachings find wide support in Russian public opinion and thus indirectly influence lawmaking and law application in that nation. Another issue this article addresses is how the Church benefits from alliances with the State that enable it to consolidate itself by suppressing possible internal dissent and fighting its opponents among non-traditional religious denominations.

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### **06.09.2022 – Court passes judgment on Jehovah’s Witnesses from Vologda**

Sova Center – On September 5, 2022, the Vologda City Court sentenced Jehovah’s Witnesses **Nikolai Stepanov and Yuri Baranov**. Both were found guilty of organizing the activities of an extremist organization (part 1 of article 282.2 of the Criminal Code). Stepanov was sentenced to four years in prison. He was taken into custody in the courtroom. Baranov received four years probation. The state prosecutor requested seven years of real time for Stepanov and seven years of probation for Baranov.

According to the investigation, with which the court agreed, from 2017 to 2019, the defendants organized the activities of the banned local religious organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses “Vologda” and “took part in its activities of an extremist nature, collecting money to finance it.”

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### **05.09.2022 – Supreme Court of Tatarstan approves sentencing of four Jehovah’s Witnesses**

Sova Center – On September 2, 2022, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Tatarstan upheld the judgment handed down by the Naberezhnye Chelny City Court against four Jehovah’s Witnesses on December 16, 2021. Recall that **Vladimir Myakushin** was found guilty under Part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organization of the activities of an extremist organization) and Part 1 of Art. 282.3 of the Criminal Code (financing of extremism) and sentenced to three years and one month of imprisonment with a two-year probationary period. **Aidar**

**Yulmetiev** received part 1 of Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code two years nine months suspended with a two-year probationary period, **Ilham Karimov and Konstantin Matrashov** – two and a half years each.

The criminal case was initiated in the spring of 2018 under cc. 1, 1.1 and 2 Art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code (organization of the activities of an extremist organization, recruitment into it and participation in its activities). Four of the accused spent six months in a pre-trial detention center, then they were transferred under house arrest, and in the spring of 2019 they took a written undertaking not to leave.

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