

# **RUSSIA: Supreme Court's decision about "extremism" threatens right of conscientious objection**

*Constitutional right to alternative service denied for young people after Supreme Court's decision liquidating Jehovah's Witnesses organization*

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia (11.05.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2qne2i1> – On 6 April 2017, a meeting of the draft commission was held in the military commissariat of the city of Zelenodolsk (Tatarstan) with regard to the case of an 18-year-old adherent of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, Damir Galeev, for whom performing military service contradicts his convictions. A member of the draft commission, A. Tygin (the mayor of the city), began arguing to other members of the commission that it is necessary to refuse the believer his constitutional rights to substitute alternative civilian service for military service on the basis that the youth allegedly is an "extremist." When the believer noted that the Supreme Court had still not issued a decision regarding the liquidation of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization, the mayor requested that he come back in three weeks and find out whether he is sent "into the troops or into prison." The believer intends to appeal the draft commission's decision in court, although he was unable to get a copy of this decision.

On 28 April 2017, in the village of Kugesi (Chuvashia) the draft commission for Cheboksary and Marposad districts, under the chairmanship of V. Nikolaev, denied an 18-year-old Jehovah's Witness, Evgeny Vladimirov, his constitutional right to alternative civilian service. Performing military service contradicts his convictions. In his case there existed a

certificate from a religious organization to the effect that at an age of accountability he received baptism in the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Members of the commission declared that this certificate "confirms that the conscript is an extremist." The young man was promised that his case would be transferred to the FSB for verification. The believer intends to appeal the commission's decision in court.

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