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## **RUSSIA: Freedom of religion or belief: Special bimonthly FORB Digest (16-30.06.2022)**

### **RUSSIA: Freedom of religion or belief: Special bimonthly FORB Digest (16-30.06.2022)**

**30.06.2022 – The Vladimir court declared illegal the ban on chanting the mantra**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://cutt.ly/dK3kVtH>

Followers of the Hindu religion appealed to the court against

the decision of the mayor's office to refuse to agree on a religious event.

The Oktyabrsky District Court of the city of Vladimir satisfied the administrative claim of a local resident Olga Khaustova against the mayor's office. She appealed the decision of the first deputy head of the city administration to refuse to approve a public religious event for the chanting of a Hindu mantra. The woman herself informed our editors about this.

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**28.06.2022 – In Pskov Region, the Court completely acquitted Aleksey Khabarov – one of Jehovah's Witnesses**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/291557.html>

On June 27, 2022, Porkhovsky District Court of Pskov Region found 47-year-old Aleksey Khabarov not guilty of participation in activity of extremist organization (article 282.2 part 2 of Criminal Code of Russian Federation). Friends who came to support the believer met the court's decision with applause.

The verdict will come into force, if the prosecutor's office does not appeal. For now, Aleksey Khabarov will continue to be under recognizance agreement.

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**27.06.2022 – In Yekaterinburg, the Buddhist center of the Karma Kagyu Association is suing for the building.**

Sova Center – On June 22, 2022, it became known that the Buddhist center in Yekaterinburg is defending the rights to

the newly purchased building through the court.

According to the head of the Russian Association of Buddhists Karma Kagyu Alexander Koybagarov, the organization used to occupy premises on the outskirts of the city, but then managed to buy a building in the center of Yekaterinburg. The opening of the Center took place in February 2022. Shortly thereafter, the former owner of the building claimed that it had been bought from him by fraud. Now the Buddhists are proving the legitimacy of the transaction through the courts.

Previously, the Karma Kagyu Buddhist Association managed to win a lawsuit over similar claims in a deal to acquire a building in Moscow.

**27.06.2022 – In Krasnoyarsk, Yevgeniy Zinich, a descendant of Jehovah's witnesses who were repressed in Soviet times, was sentenced to six years in penal colony.**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/271613.html>

On June 27, 2022, Nataliya Nikolayeva, judge of the Oktyabrskiy District Court of Krasnoyarsk, sentenced Jehovah's Witness Yevgeniy Zinich to 6 years in penal colony because he did not renounce his faith in Jehovah God after the confession's Russian legal entities were banned in 2017. The believer was taken into custody in the courtroom.

Yevgeniy Zinich, 56, is a third-generation Jehovah's Witness. His family had already been subjected to religious repression by the authorities: for refusing to take up arms for religious reasons, his grandfather received a 5-year prison term, in 1951, Yevgeniy's mother and her parents were exiled to Khakassia as part of Operation "North", and his father was sentenced to 10 years for transporting religious literature.

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**23.06.2022 – New searches in homes of believers in the Trans-Baikal Territory. For one victim, history repeats itself 71 years later.**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/231001.html>

On June 14, 2022, at least 5 civilians were subjected to searches in the town of Baley, Trans-Baikal Territory. These are Lidiya Bzovi, Yelena Baylukova, 71-year-old Tatyana Kuznetsova and the Saranchuk spouses: 75-year-old Valeriy and 71-year-old Tatyana.

The elderly believer Lidiya Bzovi is facing religious persecution for the second time in her life. In 1951, by order of Joseph Stalin, she was exiled to Siberia along with other Jehovah's Witnesses. That sad page in the history of Soviet repressions was called Operation North.

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**22.06.2022 – The City Court of Naberezhnyy Chelny left the claim of the prosecutor's office to ban 160 books by Said Nursi without consideration.**

Earlier, the decision to ban books was canceled by the Supreme Court of Tatarstan.

On June 21, 2022, the Naberezhnyy Chelny City Court decided to leave the claim of the republican prosecutor's office for the recognition of 47 titles of books and series represented by several books as extremist without consideration. Earlier, in November 2021, the court sent the publications for examination. Unfortunately, we do not have information about

what conclusions the experts came to and whether they translated the books published in the Old Turkish language. According to lawyer Ruslan Nagiyev, the decision to leave the claim without consideration was made, among other things, in connection with the defendants' argument that most of the books that the prosecutor's office sought to ban were published in a language that the court does not speak.

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**22.06.2022 – The Court of Appeals sentenced Anatoliy Gorbunov, a retiree from Krasnoyarsk, to serve a six-year sentence in a penal colony.**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/220929.html>

On June 21, 2022, a panel of judges of the Krasnoyarsk Regional Court, chaired by Yuriy Tsybulya, upheld the decision of the lower court regarding Anatoliy Gorbunov, 64. The sentence for faith in Jehovah God – 6 years in a penal colony – came into force.

Hearings in the court of first instance lasted more than a year, all this time the believer was under a recognizance not to leave. After the verdict was announced, he spent more than four months in a pre-trial detention center awaiting an appeal.

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**20.06.2022 – In Dzhankoy, the court confirmed the fine to the imam for conducting Friday prayers**

Sova Center – On June 16, 2022, the Dzhankoysky District Court of Crimea confirmed the decision of the world court on a fine

of 20,000 rubles imposed on Emir Medzhitov for “illegal” missionary work.

The defense asked to cancel the decision of the court of first instance, pointing out numerous procedural violations, as well as the fact that the prosecutor’s office did not provide evidence that Medzhitov did not just conduct Friday prayers, but carried out missionary activities.

The district court dismissed the complaint.

**17.06.2022 – ECHR considered why Jehovah’s witnesses were declared extremists and explained why this was illegal.**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/171114.html>

The inclusion of Jehovah’s Witnesses publications in the extremist list was the foundation for the subsequent ban of activities and criminal prosecution of believers. In June 2022, the European Court of Human Rights issued a ruling in which it thoroughly analyzed all the logical and legal errors made by Russian courts.

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**06.06.2022 – A court in Chita sentenced three Jehovah’s Witnesses to 6 to 6.5 years in prison, another received a suspended sentence for believing in God**

Link to full text in Russian: <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/061626.html>

On June 6, 2022, Marina Kuklina, a judge of the Central District Court of Chita, sentenced Vladimir Ermolaev and Alexander Putintsev to 6.5 years, and Igor Mamalimov to 6

years in a colony, they were taken into custody. Sergei Kirilyuk received 6 years probation.

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### **17.06.2022 – Adventist community fined in Nartkal for 'illegal' missionary work.**

Sova Center -On June 17, 2022, it became known that the Urvan District Court of Kabardino-Balkaria approved an earlier ruling imposing a fine for “illegal” missionary activity on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nartkal.

The fine amounted to 30 thousand rubles.

According to pastor Yuri Zhemukhov, in January, FSB officers seized unmarked religious literature from the church building, including the Hymn of Hope religious songbook, several newspapers, and a Bible forgotten by one of the parishioners during a search in the church building in January.

In addition, according to the FSB, a man was handing out a New Testament and a Psalter near the church. According to the pastor, the case was fabricated: “Firstly, near our church, we do not distribute religious literature at all. The testimonies of the witnesses are carbon-copied – they are both from [the village] Maiskoye, allegedly came specially to walk along our street. In court, they said that I distributed the books, although in the testimony before that they said that the books were given to them by a man who advised them to contact me later. Supposedly I can clarify those things. which they will not understand.

The pastor also said that shortly before the search, the deputy head of the FSB department in Nartkal, Sergei Setikov, asked him for a New Testament and a Psalter without the stamp of a religious organization, but there were no such

publications in the church.

**17.06.2022 – Adventists from Nartkala declared forgery in the case of distribution of religious literature**

Link to full text in Russian : <https://cutt.ly/GK3kw1C>

The Urvansky District Court in Kabardino-Balkaria approved a decision to bring to administrative responsibility the local religious organization “Church of Adventist Christians of the Seventh Day” in the city of Nartkala. The church was fined 30,000 rubles for illegal religious activities.

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**16.06.2022 – An appeal in Abakan upheld suspended sentences for two believers-two-and-a-half years each for holding Bible discussions.**

Link to full text in Russian : <https://jw-russia.org/news/2022/06/161118.html>

On June 16, 2022, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Khakassia approved the verdict against Alexander Vergunov and Matryona Spiriadi. The Judicial Collegium, chaired by Judge Elena Dyukareva, considered attending services and discussing the Bible a criminal offense.

In the court of first instance, it turned out that most of the 42 witnesses either did not know the defendants or were confused in their testimony. Despite this, the prosecutor asked to sentence the believers to 5 years in prison. The court limited itself to a suspended sentence: 2.5 years each.

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