

RUSSIA: One of two U.S. Mormons detained in southern Russia to be deported, a second may follow

HRWF (07.03.2019) – On 2 March, two U.S. citizens affiliated with the Mormon Church, Kole Brodowski and David Udo Hague, were found guilty of breaching border regulations (Part 2, Article 18.8 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses) and put in a special facility for persons under administrative arrest, which is situated in the town of Gulkevichi. They are pending deportation from Russia.

The Primorye District Court in Novorossiysk sentenced Brodowski to an administrative fine of 2,000 rubles and deportation from Russia, an Interfax correspondent reported from the courtroom.

According to the investigators, the foreigners had engaged in teaching activity in Novorossiysk, which did not coincide with the purpose of arriving in Russia.

They told the court they had come to Russia as volunteers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

Brodowski's lawyer Sergey Gliznutsa appealed the ruling.

In Kole Brodowski's own words, he had come to Russia as a missionary, taking part in official events of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

"The charter of this religious organization, which is registered by the Russian Justice Ministry, envisages various cultural and educational events, such as meetings and debates with foreign citizens in a foreign language," Gliznutsa said.

"The police drew conclusions about the alleged educational activity of the U.S. citizen from a five-minute conversation conducted in English. The fact of payment for [educational] services was not established, no assignments or textbooks were given at the meeting, and the participants did not take any notes or have any copybooks," the lawyer told the court.

According to a press release of Interfax issued today, the Krasnodar Territorial Court has upheld the ruling.

Nauvoo News said on Wednesday that the Church had confirmed the two men were arrested on Friday during a church meeting in Novorossiysk, approximately 1,000 miles south of Moscow.

In 2016, Russia officially banned religious missionaries under a questionable counter-terrorism law, which has been used on a large scale against Jehovah's Witnesses in the last two years. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said it is in compliance with the new law. The Church officially registers local workers as "volunteers," rather than missionaries.

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