

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

## **RUSSIA: More Jehovah's Witnesses jailed as "extremists"**

### **More jailed after "extremist organisation" trials – list**

*As of 9 June, 20 Jehovah's Witnesses and 1 Muslim convicted on extremism-related criminal charges are in jail or in detention awaiting appeals. Another Jehovah's Witness is under house arrest and will be jailed if her appeal fails. Another Muslim who met with others to study Nursi's works is in detention awaiting deportation after serving his jail term. Twice as many prisoners of conscience are serving sentences or are in*

***detention awaiting appeals for exercising freedom of religion  
or belief as in November 2020.***

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (09.06.2021) – <https://bit.ly/3vobujp> – Since November 2020, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims convicted on extremism-related criminal charges and serving jail terms or awaiting appeals has almost doubled, from 11 to 21. Of these, 20 are Jehovah's Witnesses and one is a Muslim who met with others to study theologian Said Nursi's works. All were sentenced to terms in general-regime labour camps (ispravitelniye kolonii, "correctional colonies").

Another Muslim, Yevgeny Kim, who met others to study Nursi's writings was sentenced to three years and nine months' imprisonment in June 2017. In January 2019, he was stripped of his Russian citizenship, and was immediately placed in a detention centre for foreign and stateless persons upon his release in April 2019. He has remained there ever since, as his birthplace of Uzbekistan refuses to accept him (see full list of all 24 prisoners of conscience at the end of this article).

Another Muslim, Yevgeny Kim, who met others to study Nursi's writings was sentenced to three years and nine months' imprisonment in June 2017. In January 2019, he was stripped of his Russian citizenship, and was immediately placed in a detention centre for foreign and stateless persons upon his release in April 2019. He has remained there ever since, as his birthplace of Uzbekistan refuses to accept him (see full list of all 24 prisoners of conscience at the end of this article).

Among recent convictions, in February 2021, Abakan City Court jailed 70-year-old Valentina Baranovskaya for two years to punish her for meeting fellow Jehovah's Witnesses for worship, a verdict her lawyer described as "devoid of all sympathy and compassion". Her 46-year-old son Roman Baranovsky was jailed for six years. Baranovskaya is the oldest – and first female – Jehovah's Witness to be sentenced to imprisonment since the 2017 ban on Jehovah's Witness activity.

Recent convictions bring to 29 the number of Jehovah's Witnesses (and one Muslim who met others to read theologian Said Nursi's works) sentenced to imprisonment since May 2018 for exercising their right to freedom of religion and belief. All but one of the Jehovah's Witnesses were sentenced as a direct consequence of the Supreme Court's 2017 liquidation of the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre, and the consequent prohibition of Jehovah's Witness activities nationwide.

In November 2020, 8 Jehovah's Witnesses and one Muslim who met with others to study Nursi's works were serving terms in general-regime labour camps, and another two Jehovah's Witnesses were detained awaiting appeal. Another Muslim who met other Muslims to study Nursi's writings had been stripped of his Russian citizenship, and was awaiting deportation in a detention centre for foreigners and stateless persons.

### ***Currently serving prison terms or detained***

Of the 20 Jehovah's Witnesses (10 more than in November 2020) and two Muslim readers of Nursi's works currently on 9 June

2021 serving prison terms or in detention:

15 are already serving their terms in general-regime labour camps across the country, usually hundreds or even thousands of kilometres from their home regions;

6 are being held in detention centres while their appeals are pending; and 1 is awaiting deportation in a detention centre for foreigners and stateless persons.

One other Jehovah's Witness – Alevtina Bagratyan – remains under house arrest awaiting her appeal. The three Jehovah's Witnesses convicted with her in Kursk on 3 June are among the six being held in detention centres while their appeals are pending.

### ***Deported, released***

Two Jehovah's Witnesses who were previously in prison have been released and deported from Russia to Uzbekistan and Ukraine. They were deprived of their Russian citizenship in 2020 as a direct result of their convictions.

Six of the 29 Jehovah's Witnesses convicted and jailed since May 2018 were released upon (or shortly after) conviction. This was because they had already served equivalent terms in detention while under investigation and on trial.

### ***Over 470 under investigation, on trial, or convicted***

More than 470 Jehovah's Witnesses remain under investigation, are on trial, or have been convicted for continuing to meet for prayer and Bible study after the 2017 Supreme Court ban.

They argue that the ban applies to the activities of the Administrative Centre and its subsidiary local congregations as legal entities, not to Jehovah's Witness beliefs or their expression by Jehovah's Witnesses.

No trials are currently underway of Muslims who met to study Nursi's works, but three people are facing prosecution in the Tatarstan and Dagestan Republics.

A total of 104 people have now received sentences, including 10 fines, 66 suspended sentences (see forthcoming article), and 28 prison terms. Several court decisions have not yet come into force, as appeals are still pending.

Two other Jehovah's Witnesses have been convicted of "continuing the activities" of the local Jehovah's Witness religious organisation in Oryol, which was liquidated as "extremist" in 2016, before the nationwide ban. One of them – Danish citizen Dennis Christensen – has been imprisoned.

At present, only one Muslim who met with others to read Nursi's works remains imprisoned – Ilgar Vagif-ogly Aliyev (born 16 February 1977). A court in Dagestan sentenced him in May 2018 to eight years' imprisonment plus two years of restrictions on freedom for alleged involvement in "Nurdzhular".

Courts in Russia's illegally annexed territories of Crimea and Sevastopol have also sentenced Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims to imprisonment for exercising their freedom of religion and belief.

## ***Acquitted, charges dropped***

In the last four years, only one Jehovah's Witness – Yury Zalipayev from the Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya – has been acquitted of an extremism-related offence. His case was unconnected to the 2017 ban.

Charges against a further nine have been dropped. Eight of them were being prosecuted as a consequence of the 2017 ban, the other on unrelated "extremism" charges.

## ***Raids on Jehovah's Witness homes continue***

The Investigative Committee, police, the FSB security service, and National Guard troops continue to raid Jehovah's Witness homes. Some of the raids have included torture, with no arrests or trials of suspect torturers. The most recent known raids were in Kemerovo Region on 8 June, Khabarovsk Region on 5 June, Lipetsk Region on 1 June, and Altay Region on 27 May. Prosecutions are currently underway in 64 of Russia's 83 federal subjects.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in May 2020 adopted a wide-ranging Opinion condemning the "ever-growing number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia who have been arrested, detained and charged with criminal activity on the basis of mere exercise of freedom of religion".

Muslims who meet to study the writings of Said Nursi may also

be prosecuted under the Extremism Law for organising or participating in the activities of “Nurdzhular”. This organisation was banned as extremist in 2008, but Muslims in Russia deny it ever existed. Typically, such Muslims meet in homes to study Islam, with one or more expounding on Nursi’s works. They also pray, eat, and drink tea together, and do not seek state permission to meet.

## ***Prosecutions***

Despite the similarities in the manifestations of freedom of religion and belief being prosecuted, including meeting in each other’s homes to pray and sing together, study sacred texts, and to discuss shared beliefs, trials have so far ended in a variety of sentences. These have ranged from prison terms of several years, to suspended sentences of varying lengths, to a range of fines. one sentence of assigned labour, later changed to a fine.

No one prosecuted in cases relating to the 2017 nationwide ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses has been acquitted, though judges have returned some cases to prosecutors who later resubmit them. Defendants have sometimes succeeded in getting sentences reduced, or having cases sent for retrial on appeal, though no conviction has yet been overturned.

List of those jailed or detained after “extremism”-related convictions for exercising freedom of religion or belief. Unless otherwise stated, all those named are Jehovah’s Witnesses. Convictions have been under these Criminal Code articles: Article 282, Part 1 (“Actions directed at the

incitement of hatred [nenavist] or enmity [vrazhda], as well as the humiliation of an individual or group of persons on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, attitude to religion, or social group”); Article 282.2 for “organising” (Part 1), or “participating in” (Part 2), “the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity”. The majority of convictions have been under this Article;

- Article 282.2, Part 1.1 (“Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation”);
- and Article 282.3, Part 1 (“Financing extremist activity”).

This list is broken down by category of punishment with regional headings referring to where people were tried, not where they are imprisoned.

## ***CURRENT IMPRISONMENTS***

### ***SENTENCES HAVE ENTERED LEGAL FORCE***

- Republic of Dagestan Izberbash City Court 28 May 2018 1) Ilgar Vagif-ogly Aliyev (Muslim – born 16 February 1977)
- 8 years + 2 years’ restrictions on freedom Criminal Code Articles: 282.2, Part 1; 282.2, Part 1.1 Appeal: unsuccessful
- 25 July 2018, Supreme Court of the Republic of Dagestan

Prison address: 410086, Saratovskaya oblast, g. Saratov, Peschano-Umetsky trakt, p. Yelshanka, FKU Ispravitel'naya



koloniya No. 33 UFSIN Rossii po Saratovskoy oblasti Kemerovo Region Beryozovsky City Court 2 September 2020

2) Sergey Alekseyevich Britvin (born 18 August 1965) – 4 years

3) Vadim Anatolyevich Levchuk (born 6 February 1972) – 4 years  
Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 19 January 2021, Kemerovo Regional Court Prison address: 630097, Novosibirskaya oblast, g. Novosibirsk, ul. Zvyozdnaya 34, FKU Ispravitel'naya koloniya No. 3 UFSIN Rossii po Novosibirskoy oblasti

– Khakasiya Republic

Abakan City Court 24 February 2021

4) Roman Lyubomirovich Baranovsky (born 27 June 1974) – 6 years

5) Valentina Ivanovna Baranovskaya (born 8 April 1951)

– 2 years Criminal Code Articles: 282.2, Part 1 and 282.2, Part 2 respectively Appeal: unsuccessful – 24 May 2021, Supreme Court of the Khakassiya Republic Detention centre address: 655017, Respublika Khakasiya, g. Abakan, kv. Molodyozhniy 22B, FKU Sledstvenniy izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Respublike Khakasiya

Krasnodar Region Abinsk District Court, Abinsk 10 February 2021

6) Aleksandr Yevgenyevich Ivshin (born 21 August 1957) – 7 years and 6 months, plus destruction of Bible (in an edition

not banned as “extremist”) Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 15 April 2021, Krasnodar Regional Court Prison address: from 1 June 2021 – 390013, Ryazanskaya oblast, g. Ryazan, Pervomaysky prospekt 27b, FKU Sledstvenniy izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Ryazanskoy oblasti

(This is Ivshin’s seventh place of detention since his conviction – one in Novorossiysk in his home region of Krasnodar; one each in Rostov-on-Don, Volgograd, and Saratov; two in Samara Region; and now one in Ryazan. It remains unknown where he will serve his sentence.) Abinsk District Court 30 March 2021

7) Oleg Ivanovich Danilov (born 22 April 1974) – 3 years Criminal Code Article: 2 82.2, Part 2 Appeal: unsuccessful – 25 May 2021, Krasnodar Regional Court Prison address: 352680, Krasnodarskiy kray, Apsheronskiy rayon, g. Khadyzhensk, ul. Griboyedova 42, FKU Ispravitel'naya koloniya No. 9 UFSIN Rossii po Krasnodarskomu krayu –

Novosibirsk Region Lenin District Court, Novosibirsk 16 December 2020

8) Yury Prokopyevich Savelyov (born 1 January 1954) – 6 years Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 5 April 2021, Novosibirsk Regional Court Prison address: 658209, Altayskiy kray, g. Rubtsovsk, ul. Traktornaya 23, FKU Ispravitel'naya koloniya No. 5 UFSIN Rossii po Altayskomu krayu  
Omsk Region Pervomayskiy District Court, Omsk 30 November 2020

9) Sergey Valyeryevich Polyakov (born 28 April 1972) – 3 years Criminal Code Articles: 282.2, Part 1 and 282.3 Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 28 May 2021, Omsk Regional Court Detention centre address: 644007, Omskaya oblast, g. Omsk, ul.

Ordzhonikidze 86, FKU Sledstvenniy izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Omskoy oblasti Three fellow defendants were tried under Criminal Code Article 282.2 Part 2 and given two-year suspended sentences. Oryol Region Railway District Court, Oryol 6 February 2019.

10) Dennis Ole Christensen (born 18 December 1972 – Danish citizen) – 6 years Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 23 May 2019, Oryol Regional Court Prison address: 307754 Kurskaya oblast, g. Lgov, ul. Primakova 23A, FKU Ispravitel'naya koloniya No. 3 UFSIN Rossii po Kurskoy oblasti Christensen has attempted unsuccessfully to gain early release. A court ruling of 23 June 2020, which replaced his remaining term with a fine, was challenged by prosecutors, and Christensen's request was turned down on re-examination on 26 October 2020 (this decision was upheld at Kursk Regional Court on 10 February 2021)

Saratov Region

Lenin District Court, Saratov  
19 September 2019

11) Aleksey Vladimirovich Budenchuk (born 27 July 1982) – 3 years and 6 months

12) Gennady Vasilyevich German (born 12 June 1969) – 2 years and 6 months

13) Roman Aleksandrovich Gridasov (16 September 1978) – 2 years and 6 months

14) Aleksey Petrovich Miretsky (born 14 December 1975) – 2 years and 6 months

All four also have 1 year's restrictions on freedom + 5-year ban on holding leadership positions in any public organisation. They were convicted alongside Konstantin

Bazhenov and Feliks Makhammadiyev, who have since been released and deported. Some of the six have been tortured. No suspect torturer is known to have been arrested or put on criminal trial. Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful 20 December 2019, Saratov Regional Court Prison address: 460026, g. Orenburg, Krymsky pereulok 119, FKU Ispravitel'naya koloniya No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Orenburgskoy oblasti Gridasov, Miretsky, German, and Budenchuk applied for early release and the replacement of their remaining terms with fines. Central District Court in Orenburg refused all four requests (Gridasov on 10 December 2020 (unsuccessful appeal on 24 February 2021), Miretsky on 15 December 2020 (unsuccessful appeal on 26 February 2021), German on 18 January 2021, Budenchuk on 19 February 2021). (Bazhenov in Saratov should not be confused with fellow Jehovah's Witness Konstantin Aleksandrovich Bazhenov from Kamchatka, given a two-year suspended sentence in September 2020.) Tomsk Region October District Court, Tomsk 5 November 2019 15) Sergey Gennadyevich Klimov (born 26 March 1970) – 6 years + 1 year's restriction on freedom; 5-year ban on any educational activity and posting material on the internet. Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 20 February 2020, Tomsk Regional Court Prison address: 414044 Astrakhanskaya oblast, g. Astrakhan, ul. Sovetskoy Gvardii 50, FKU Ispravitel'naya koloniya No. 8 UFSIN Rossii po Astrakhanskoy oblasti

***SENTENCED TO IMPRISONMENT – DETAINED OR UNDER HOUSE ARREST  
AWAITING APPEAL***

– Krasnodar Region Abinsk District Court 6 April 2021 1) Aleksandr Anatolyevich Shcherbina (born 11 March 1976) – 3 years Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 2 Appeal: due on 16 June 2021 at Krasnodar Regional Court Detention centre address: 353905, Krasnodarskiy kray, g. Novorossiysk, ul.

Parkhomenko 33, FKU Sledstvenniy izolyator No. 3 UFSIN Rossii po Krasnodarskomu krayu Krasnoyarsk Region Railway District Court, Krasnoyarsk 3 June 2021 2) Andrey Garafetanovich Stupnikov (born 17 September 1973) – 6 years Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unknown

Detention centre address: 660075, Krasnoyarskiy kray, g. Krasnoyarsk, ul. Respubliki 72, FKU Sledstvenniy izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Krasnoyarskomu krayu Kursk Region Promyshlenny District Court, Kursk 3 June 2021 3) Andrey Leonidovich Andreyev (born 12 October 1976) – 4 years and 6 months; Criminal Code: Article 282.2, Part 1

4) Andrey Vladimirovich Ryshkov (born 6 May 1987) – 3 years;

5) Artyom Babkenovich Bagratyan (born 9 May 1972) – 2 years and 6 months;

6) Alevtina Mikhailovna Bagratyan (born 25 July 1977) – 2 years; Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 2 Tried alongside Aleksandr Vospitanyuk, who received a two-year suspended sentence Appeal: unknown Detention centre address: 305016, Kurskaya oblast, g. Kursk, ul. Pirogova 1, FKU Sledstvenniy izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Kurskoy oblasti (for Andreyev, Ryshkov, and Artyom Bagratyan).

Alevtina Bagratyan will remain under house arrest until the ruling comes into force.

Saratov Region Lenin District Court, Saratov 20 May 2021

7) Rustam Atayevich Seidkuliyeu (born 17 July 1977) – 2 years and 6 months, plus 1 year of restrictions on freedom Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 2 Appeal: unknow Detention centre address: unknown

***DETAINED AWAITING POSSIBLE DEPORTATION***

– Khabarovsk Region Blagoveshchensk City Court 19 June 2017

1) Yevgeny Lvovich Kim (Muslim – born 5 October 1974) – 3 years and 9 months Criminal Code Articles: 282.2, Part 1, and 282, Part 1 Tortured while in pre-trial detention in 2015; no suspect torturer known to have been arrested or put on criminal trial. Immediately Kim was released deprived of Russian citizenship and left stateless.

Railway District Court, Khabarovsk 10 April 2019

Fined under Administrative Code Article 18.8, Part 1 for failing to have documentation and ordered deported.

Foreigners' detention centre address: 680003 Khabarovskiy kray, g. Khabarovsk, ul. Repina 3, Tsentr vremennogo sodержaniya inostrannikh grazhdan

On 28 October 2020, Kim applied unsuccessfully for cancellation of his criminal record (snyatiye sudimosti). On 10 November 2020, the Institute for Law and Public Policy lodged an appeal on Kim's behalf at the Constitutional Court, questioning the constitutionality of Administrative Code Article 18.8, Part 1.1 ("Violation by a foreign citizen or stateless person of the residence regime of the Russian Federation, expressed in the absence of documents confirming the right to reside in the Russian Federation") and Article 3.10, Part 5, which gives judges the right to detain people before deportation but does not impose any time limit. This was also unsuccessful.

***SENTENCED TO IMPRISONMENT BUT RELEASED BECAUSE OF TIME IN***

## **DETENTION**

–

Bryansk Region Novozybkov City Court 3 September 2020

1) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Khokhlov (born 9 April 1977) – 1 year and 3 months'; 1 year's restrictions on freedom

2) Tatyana Viktorovna Shamsheva (born 7 June 1977) – 1 year; 6 months' restrictions on freedom

3) Olga Sergeevna Silayeva (born 11 May 1988) – 1 year; 6 months' restrictions on freedom

4) Eduard Vladimirovich Zhinzhikov (born 9 November 1971) – 1 year and 3 months; 1 year's restrictions on freedom Criminal Code Articles: 282.2, Part 1, 282.3 Part 1 (Khokhlov and Zhinzhikov); 282.2, Part 2 (Shamsheva and Silayeva) Appeal: unsuccessful – 28 October 2020, Bryansk Regional Court

None of the four has been imprisoned, as the two women had already served 245 days and the two men 316 days in detention before conviction. They did, however, remain subject to the restrictions on freedom imposed by the judge.

-Krasnodar Region Khostinsky District Court, Sochi 18 December 2020

5) Nikolay Nikolayevich Kuzichkin (born 28 February 1951) – 1 year and 1 month;

6) Vyacheslav Alekseyevich Popov (born 19 September 1974) – 1 year and 10 months Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: none Kuzichkin was released from the courtroom, as he had already served 197 days in detention and 240 days under house arrest. Popov remained in detention for another 11 days

after conviction, by which time he had spent a total of 446 days in detention.

### ***DEPORTED FOLLOWING IMPRISONMENT***

-Saratov Region Lenin District Court, Saratov 19 September 2019

1) Konstantin Viktorovich Bazhenov (born 10 May 1975) – 3 years and 6 months

2) Feliks Khasanovich Makhammadiyev (born 14 December 1984) – 3 years Criminal Code Article: 282.2, Part 1 Appeal: unsuccessful – 20 December 2019, Saratov Regional Court Tried alongside Aleksey Budenchuk, Gennady German, Roman Gridasov, and Aleksey Miretsky. Bazhenov was released early from Labour Camp No. 3 in Dmitrovgrad (Ulyanovsk Region) on 5 May 2021 and sent to a migration detention centre – deported to Ukraine on 19 May 2021. (Bazhenov in Saratov should not be confused with fellow Jehovah's Witness Konstantin Aleksandrovich Bazhenov from Kamchatka, given a two-year suspended sentence in September 2020.)

Makhammadiyev was released from Labour Camp No. 1 in Orenburg on 31 December 2020 at the end of his sentence and sent to a migration detention centre – deported to Uzbekistan on 21 January 2021.

Photo : Yevgeny Kim Copyright Memorial – Forum 18

**Further reading about FORB in Russia on HRWF website**



**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269