

RUSSIA: Mormon leaders challenge reports about deported missionaries

Document: Official statement of Church on the situation in Samara

Russia Religion News (26.08.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2cblIfR> – “Leaders of the Church are concerned about the distorted and prejudiced coverage in news media of the activity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.”

On Thursday, 25 August, a number of news media published information about the deportation of foreign volunteers who are in the Russian federation upon the invitation of the local religious organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the city of Samara.

These reports contain a number of inaccuracies and are not entirely reliable. The leaders of the centralized religious organization “The Religious Association of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Russia” (hereinafter “Church”), of which the local religious organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the city of Samara is a member, consider it necessary to explain.

The claim that the volunteers who were invited to Russia are not on the migration register, in violation of Russian law, does not comport with reality.

Over the course of many years (the local religious organization in Samara was registered in 1999) the invitation of citizens from various countries of the world has not evoked any complaints. They were recorded on the migration register at the address of the religious organization. In the free time of their stay there they were recorded at the address of their

residence used in accordance with their employment contract.

Placement on the migration register at any of the indicated addresses complies fully with existing legislation. In accordance with point 4 of part 1 of article 2 of the federal law "On the migration registration of foreign citizens and persons without citizenship in the Russian federation" the place of the stay of a foreign citizen in the RF at an address that is not the place of residence is also another location, institution, or organization in which the foreign citizen is.

Courts in the city of Samara decided that the aforesaid citizens of the USA should have been recorded on the register at the address of residence. However even in this case their administrative deportation beyond the borders of the Russian federation, ordered by the court, is a manifestly disproportionate penalty. The religious association is considering the question of appealing these judicial decisions.

In addition, one publication (life.ru) posted a photograph of citizens of the USA who arrived in the Russian federation, while the constitution of the RF (article 24) forbids dissemination of information about the private life of a person without his consent. These people had not given their consent to taking the photograph and publishing their images, which gives them the right to appeal for judicial protection.

Volunteers of the Church throughout the world serve on the model of Jesus Christ. They devote two years of their life to volunteer activity, which they perform on a voluntary basis. Volunteers finance their ministry independently and they do not receive pay for this. Upon return home, for the rest of their life they remain ambassadors and defenders of the country in which they served.

The leaders of the Church are concerned by the increasing instances of distorted and prejudicial coverage in the news

media of the activity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). Believers have the right to count on a respectful attitude on the part of representatives of news media and the public.