

# UKRAINE/CRIMEA: “Anti-missionary” prosecutions double in 2018

*Compared to the first year they were implemented, punishments in Russian-occupied Crimea for ill-defined “missionary activity” doubled in 2018. Of 23 prosecutions for sharing faith or holding worship at unapproved venues, 19 ended in punishment. Also, 17 cases were brought for communities not using their full legal name.*

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (09.01.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2RNzdtR> – In Russian-occupied Crimea in 2018 there were 23 prosecutions brought against individuals for ill-defined “missionary activity”, of which 19 ended with punishment, Forum 18 has found. Many of those punished were prosecuted for sharing their faith on the street or for holding worship at unapproved venues. Cases against two more are due to be heard in mid-January 2019.

This represents a doubling of such cases in the Crimean peninsula since the first year such punishments for “missionary activity” were imposed. July 2016 to July 2017 saw 13 known cases of which 8 ended in punishment.

“These punishments do have an impact,” one member of a religious community in Crimea who was earlier fined for sharing their faith on the street told Forum 18 on 9 January

2019. “Believers go out to share their faith less often, and give out publications or invitations less openly. It is a question not just of fines – if you don’t pay then fines are doubled, then if you still don’t pay they impose compulsory labour.”

Twelve of the people punished in Crimea in 2018 – all Russian citizens – were fined about 10 days’ average local wages each (Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 – “Russians conducting missionary activity”).

A further seven people – all longtime residents who are Ukrainian citizens – were punished for participating in religious meetings of a community they belonged to. Six of the seven were given far higher fines of up to nearly two months’ average local wages (Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 5 – “Foreigners conducting missionary activity”). These seven cases against Ukrainian citizens appear to be the first use in Russian-occupied Crimea of this Russian Administrative Code article, which is specifically aimed at non-Russians.

There were also 17 cases brought in Crimea in 2018 against 12 religious communities and 5 individuals to punish them for failing to use the full legal name of a registered religious community (Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 3 – “Implementation of activities by a religious organisation without indicating its official full name, including the issuing or distribution, within the framework of missionary activity, of literature and printed, audio, and video material without a label bearing this name, or with an incomplete or deliberately false label”).

Nine of these 17 cases ended with fines of 30,000 Russian Roubles (nearly two months' average local wages) each and another with a warning. The communities known to have faced administrative cases are: 6 Pentecostal, 2 Baptist, 1 Lutheran, 1 Russian Orthodox, 1 Muslim and 1 Karaite. The others seven cases ended with no punishment.

This represents a slight increase in the number of such cases under Article 5.26, Part 3. In the first year of the imposition of such punishments – between July 2016 and July 2017 – Forum 18 found 14 such administrative cases, of which 8 ended in punishment.

A full listing of known 2018 cases in the administratively separate Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol – based on court decisions and court records seen by Forum 18 – is at the foot of this article.

Administrative prosecutions are also brought against those who have or are deemed to be in charge of religious literature the Russian authorities consider “extremist”. One 2018 prosecution was of a doctor in an oncology department where a prayer room library was located (see below).

In addition to these punishments under Russia's Administrative Code, at least five individuals are facing criminal prosecution for exercising their freedom of religion or belief. The trial of four Muslims accused of membership of the banned “extremist” missionary movement Tabligh Jamaat is due to begin at Crimea's Supreme Court on 10 January. A criminal case – also on “extremism”-related charges – has been launched

against the former head of a Jehovah's Witness community in Dzhankoi (see below).

### ***Wide-ranging and ill-defined "anti-missionary" penalties***

The 40 Russian Administrative Code cases in Crimea in 2018 were all brought under wide-ranging and ill-defined "anti-missionary" Russian legal changes made in July 2016. The Russian authorities immediately imposed these punishments in Crimea, which they occupied in March 2014.

Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 3 punishes the "Implementation of activities by a religious organisation without indicating its official full name, including the issuing or distribution, within the framework of missionary activity, of literature and printed, audio, and video material without a label bearing this name, or with an incomplete or deliberately false label". This incurs a fine of 30,000 to 50,000 Roubles and the confiscation of any literature or other material.

In upholding a Russian Pentecostal Pastor's appeal in November 2017, Russia's Supreme Court declared that Article 5.26, Part 3 does not apply to private individuals or people employed in an official capacity, only to legal entities. This may account for why cases under this Part against three individuals in Crimea in 2018 were returned for correction. In two of these cases, against Protestant pastors, cases were then submitted against their churches. However, one individual, Artyom Morev, was fined (see list below).

Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 punishes “Russians conducting missionary activity”. This incurs a fine of 5,000 to 50,000 Roubles. For organisations (legal entities), the fine is 100,000 to 1 million Roubles. Unregistered religious groups must notify the authorities of their existence, activities and membership and are not legal entities. Their members are therefore subject to prosecution as individuals.

Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 5 punishes “Foreigners conducting missionary activity”. This incurs a fine of 30,000 to 50,000 Roubles with the possibility of expulsion from Russia.

Human rights defender Aleksandr Sedov of the Crimean Human Rights Group stated in 2017 that the punishments violate the rights to freedom of religion or belief enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. He also pointed out that they also break the Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which enshrines the rights of civilians in occupied territories.

### ***Tight Russian freedom of religion and belief restrictions***

Since the March 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, local religious communities which wanted to continue to function had to re-register under Russian law. Many were forced to restructure themselves to meet Russian requirements. This usually entailed cutting ties to their fellow-believers elsewhere in Ukraine.

Individuals and religious communities in Crimea were also subjected to the web of restrictions on exercising freedom of religion or belief enshrined in Russian law. They have faced raids, fines, religious literature seizures, government surveillance, expulsions of invited foreign religious leaders, unilateral cancellation of property rental contracts and obstructions to regaining places of worship confiscated in the Soviet period.

### ***Awaiting hearings***

Two prosecutions under Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 (“Russians conducting missionary activity”) are about to be heard.

Magistrate Svetlana Uruyupina of Kerch Magistrate’s Court No. 51 is due to hear the case of local Pentecostal Vasily Olovyanishnikov in the afternoon of 10 January 2019, according to court records.

Magistrate Yekaterina Chumachenko of Simferopol Magistrate’s Court No. 75 is due to hear the case of Hare Krishna devotee Andrei Tereshchenko in the morning of 14 January, according to court records.

One case is about to be heard under Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 3 (“Implementation of activities by a religious organisation without indicating its official full

name, including the issuing or distribution, within the framework of missionary activity, of literature and printed, audio, and video material without a label bearing this name, or with an incomplete or deliberately false label”). Magistrate Andrei Karnaukhov is due to hear the case against Sevastopol’s Hare Krishna community at noon on 29 January, according to court records. The case had originally been brought against the community leader Valentin Penzov (see below).

### ***Fines for “extremist” religious literature***

Individuals are also fined for having or being deemed to be in charge of religious literature the Russian authorities consider “extremist”.

Officers of Russia’s FSB security service searched a small library next to a prayer room in the oncology department of the city hospital in Feodosiya on 29 June 2018, Radio Free Europe’s Crimea Realities service noted on 20 September 2018. The prayer room was “open to all”, the subsequent court decision notes, and the library included religious items of several faiths, as well as literary and historical works.

FSB officers discovered two Islamic books and one brochure which Russian courts had banned as “extremist” and which are on Russia’s Federal List of Extremist Materials. One item was by the late Turkish Muslim theologian Said Nursi and another by the contemporary Istanbul Naqshbandi Sufi teacher Osman Nuri Topbas.

Even though the subsequent court decision quotes one witness as declaring that “no one in the [oncology] department was responsible for the library”, prosecutors deemed urologist Smail Temindarov responsible. They noted that he had stamped the books to try to prevent patients and visitors from taking any books away from the department.

Prosecutors brought a case against Temindarov under Russian Administrative Code Article 20.29 (“Production or mass distribution of extremist materials included in the published Federal List of Extremist Materials, as well as their production or storage for mass distribution”).

On 20 September, Judge Yelena Gurova of Feodosiya City Court found the doctor guilty, according to the decision seen by Forum 18. She fined him 2,000 Russian Roubles. Temindarov did not appeal against the decision.

Since the Russian annexation of Crimea, religious communities, libraries and individuals have repeatedly faced raids and punishment over religious literature which is banned as “extremist” but which does not appear to violate the human rights of others.

Officers – often armed – have raided numerous madrassahs (Muslim colleges), libraries, Muslim-owned homes and Jehovah’s Witness meetings seizing such literature. Individuals have been punished under Russian Administrative Code Administrative Code Article 20.29 (“Production or mass distribution of extremist materials included in the published Federal List of Extremist Materials, as well as their production or storage

for mass distribution”).

### ***Criminal cases also underway***

In addition to these Russian Administrative Code cases, five individuals are known to be facing criminal prosecution to punish their exercise of freedom of religion or belief.

The trial of four Muslims – accused of membership of the banned Muslim missionary movement Tabligh Jamaat – is due to begin at Crimea’s Supreme Court in Simferopol at 10 am on 10 January 2019, according to court records. Renat Suleimanov, Talyat Abdurakhmanov, Seiran Mustafaev and Arsen Kubedinov are being tried under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2.

Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 punishes “Organisation of” and Part 2 punishes “participation in” “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”.

Russia’s FSB security service launched criminal cases against the four Crimean Tatar Muslims in late September 2017. Days later, masked men staged early morning raids on their homes. Suleimanov has been in Simferopol’s Investigation Prison since then. The other three are awaiting trial under restrictions at home.

The Russian FSB security service opened a criminal case in mid-November 2018 against Sergei Filatov, who headed a Jehovah's Witness community in Dzhankoi until it was forcibly liquidated in May 2017 following the Russian Supreme Court ban on all Jehovah's Witness communities.

About 10 groups of FSB officers, OMON riot police and possibly officers of other agencies who had come from Simferopol then raided the homes in Dzhankoi of eight families (including that of Filatov) who were members of the two local Jehovah's Witness communities before they were banned in 2017. Violence was used against some of them, while a pregnant woman suffered a miscarriage following the raids.

### ***Known Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26 cases in Crimea in 2018***

The list of known 2018 prosecutions under Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Parts 3, 4 and 5, based on court records and other information (date of court hearing, name of individual/community, punishment, court, material on which prosecution based, appeal):

– Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 3 (“Implementation of activities by a religious organisation without indicating its official full name, including the issuing or distribution, within the framework of missionary activity, of literature and printed, audio, and video material without a label bearing this name, or with an incomplete or deliberately false label”)

1) 9 February 2018

Name: A. Selivanov

Punishment: none

Court: Bakhchisarai Magistrate's Court No. 27

Circumstances: Returned for correction

Appeal: none

2) 21 February 2018

Name: Jesus is Lord Pentecostal Church

Punishment: none

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 15

Circumstances: Returned for correction

Appeal: none

3) 5 March 2018

Name: Alushta Pentecostal Church

Punishment: none

Court: Belogorsk Magistrate's Court No. 22

Circumstances: Returned for correction

Appeal: none

4) 6 March 2018

Name: Victory Pentecostal Church

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Yalta Magistrate's Court No. 97

Circumstances: Registered church failed to have sign on worship building

Appeal: none

5) 14 March 2018

Name: Sevastopol Lutheran Parish

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 9

Circumstances: unknown

Appeal: none

6) 27 March 2018

Name: St Paul Pentecostal Church

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Simferopol Magistrate's Court No. 17

Circumstances: Registered church failed to have sign on worship building

Appeal: none

7) 20 April 2018

Name: Pozharskoe Baptist Church

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Simferopol Magistrate's Court No. 76

Circumstances: Registered church failed to have sign on worship building

Appeal: none

8) 18 May 2018

Name: Light of the Resurrection Pentecostal Church

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 11/13

Circumstances: Notice with full name of church on door of hall, but not on outside of building

Appeal: Sevastopol's Lenin District Court, 19 June 2018, no change

9) 24 May 2018

Name: Andrei Konstantinov

Punishment: none

Court: Kerch Magistrate's Court No. 47

Circumstances: Pastor of Pentecostal Church of Blessing (see below); Returned for correction

Appeal: none

10) 13 June 2018

Name: St Paisy Velichkovsky Orthodox Monastery

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 2

Circumstances: Registered community failed to have sign with full name on worship building

Appeal: Sevastopol's Balaklava District Court, 13 August 2018,

no change

11) 26 June 2018

Name: Ikhlyas Muslim Community

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Dzhankoi Magistrate's Court No. 35

Circumstances: Crimean Muslim Board community failed to have sign on worship building

Appeal: Dzhankoi District Court, 19 July 2018, no change

12) 10 September 2018

Name: Artyom Morev

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Bakhchiserai Magistrate's Court No. 29

Circumstances: Pastor of Generation of Faith Pentecostal church from Yalta

Appeal: none

13) 17 September 2018

Name: Pyotr Dukh

Punishment: none

Court: Razdolnoe Magistrate's Court No. 68

Circumstances: Pastor of Berezovka Baptist Church (see below); Returned for correction

Appeal: none

14) 18 September 2018

Name: Pentecostal Church of Blessing

Punishment: none

Court: Kerch Magistrate's Court No. 47

Circumstances: Returned for correction

Appeal: none

15) 10 October 2018

Name: Berezovka Baptist Church

Punishment: Warning

Court: Razdolnoe Magistrate's Court No. 68

Circumstances: unknown

Appeal: none

16) 20 December 2018

Name: Valentin Penzov

Punishment: none

Court: Gagarin District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Leader of registered Hare Krishna community;  
Transferred to different court; Case later brought against  
community (see above)

Appeal: none

17) 24 December 2018

Name: Karaite Religious Community

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Yevpatoriya District Magistrate's Court No. 42

Circumstances: Failed to have sign outside place of worship

Appeal: none

– Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 (“Russians conducting missionary activity”)

1) 12 January 2018

Name: Yuri Moiseev

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 5

Circumstances: Spoke of faith, sang at bus stop

Appeal: none

2) 12 January 2018

Name: Aleksei Gabrielyan

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 5

Circumstances: Spoke of faith, sang at bus stop

Appeal: Appeal Gagarin District Court 26 February 2018  
cancelled fine as case filed too late

3) 12 January 2018

Name: Mikhail Leppik

Punishment: none – acquitted

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 5

Circumstances: Offering leaflets at bus stop

Appeal: none

4) 12 January 2018

Name: Yevgeny Kornev

Punishment: none – acquitted

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 5

Circumstances: Offering leaflets at bus stop

Appeal: none

5) 27 February 2018

Name: Pavel Dyakov

Punishment: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 16

Circumstances: Council of Churches Baptist gave out Christian magazines on the street

Appeal: Sevastopol's Lenin District Court, 19 April 2018, fine reduced to 5,000 Roubles because of low family income; Sevastopol City Court 22 October 2018 no change

6) 9 March 2018

Name: D. Adamenko

Punishment: none

Court: Bakhchisarai Magistrate's Court No. 27

Circumstances: Returned for correction

Appeal: none

7) 29 March 2018

Name: Gennady Gorbatovsky

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Feodosiya Magistrate's Court No. 90

Circumstances: Protestant leader organised worship meetings in hotel

Appeal: none

8) 5 April 2018

Name: Aleksandr Ivanenkov

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Simferopol Magistrate's Court No. 21

Circumstances: Pentecostal House of the Potter Church member addressed worship service ("sectarian events") without church's due authorisation

Appeal: Simferopol's Central District Court, 7 June 2018, no change

9) 25 April 2018

Name: Ebazer Abdulzatov

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Sevastopol Magistrate's Court No. 12

Circumstances: unknown

Appeal: none

10) 26 April 2018

Name: V. Kotenkov

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Belogorsk Magistrate's Court No. 22

Circumstances: unknown

Appeal: none

11) 3 May 2018

Name: L. Kotenkova

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Belogorsk Magistrate's Court No. 22

Circumstances: unknown

Appeal: none

12) 7 June 2018

Name: Vitaly Savchuk

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court

Circumstances: Pentecostal member of Russian-based church held worship meeting in House of Culture

Appeal: none

13) 20 June 2018

Name: A. Islyamov

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Simferopol Magistrate's Court No. 76

Circumstances: unknown

Appeal: none

14) 13 July 2018

Name: D. Ivanov

Punishment: none

Court: Feodosiya Magistrate's Court No. 87

Circumstances: Transferred to different court, then returned for correction

Appeal: none

15) 24 October 2018

Name: Maksim Karpukhin

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Yalta Magistrate's Court No. 94

Circumstances: Formed religious group (affiliation unknown) without notifying authorities

Appeal: none

16) 4 December 2018

Name: V. Svetaev

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Kerch Magistrate's Court No. 51

Circumstances: Pentecostal pastor whose registered church held services at unapproved locations

Appeal: none

– Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 5 (“Foreigners conducting missionary activity”)

1) 12 April 2018

Name: Yekaterina Bochkareva

Punishment: 15,000 Roubles

Court: Gagarin District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident participated in Pentecostal worship meeting

Appeal: none

2) 12 April 2018

Name: Olga Vorobyova

Punishment: 15,000 Roubles

Court: Gagarin District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident participated in Pentecostal worship meeting

Appeal: none

3) 24 May 2018

Name: D. Polish

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Balaklava District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident participated in Pentecostal worship meeting

Appeal: none

4) 25 May 2018

Name: Archil Gevorkov

Punishment: 15,000 Roubles

Court: Gagarin District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident participated in Pentecostal worship meeting

Appeal: none

5) 25 May 2018

Name: Denis Bochkarev

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Gagarin District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident participated in Pentecostal worship meeting

Appeal: none

6) 25 May 2018

Name: Yekaterina Bochkareva (second case)

Punishment: 30,000 Roubles

Court: Gagarin District Court, Sevastopol

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident participated in Pentecostal worship meeting

Appeal: none

7) 23 November 2018

Name: Anatoly Tkachenko

Punishment: 5,000 Roubles

Court: Kerch City Court

Circumstances: Ukrainian citizen and longtime resident, participated in Good News Pentecostal Church worship meeting, case transferred 20 November 2018 from Magistrate's Court No. 44

Appeal: none

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## **UKRAINE-CRIMEA/RUSSIA: Up to 10 years' jail for Muslims, Jehovah's Witness?**

*In "extremism" criminal cases opened by Russia's FSB in occupied Crimea, four Muslims face imminent trial, while Jehovah's Witness Sergei Filatov is under investigation. They face up to 10 years' jail. The Muslims "simply gathered in the local mosque to discuss religious questions", a lawyer stated. "We simply ask the authorities to respect our rights to meet together and read the Bible," Filatov told Forum 18.*

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (28.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2r7pJL0> – Nearly 14 months after the Russian FSB security service opened the first criminal case in occupied Crimea against four alleged members of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, their trial on "extremism"-related charges is imminent at Crimea's Supreme Court in the regional capital Simferopol, a court official told Forum 18. The alleged leader faces up to 10 years' imprisonment if convicted, while the other three each face up to 6 years' imprisonment. All four are from the Crimean Tatar minority.

“The men simply gathered in the local mosque to discuss religious questions,” a legal specialist familiar with the case told Forum 18. “This is of course a question of freedom of conscience.” Officials refused to put Forum 18 through to the prosecutor who prepared the indictment (see below).

The four Muslims were first arrested in October 2017 after the FSB opened criminal cases against them. Three have been held at home for most of the time since then. But one, 49-year-old Renat Suleimanov – who the authorities regard as the leader of the group – has been in pre-trial detention for more than a year, since his October 2017 arrest (see below).

The four Muslims are facing charges under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2. This punishes “Organisation of” or “participation in” “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”.

On 14 November, the Russian FSB security service opened the first criminal case in occupied Crimea against a Jehovah’s Witness, Sergei Filatov, on the same “extremism”-related charges. The following day, about 10 groups of FSB security service and OMON riot police officers from Simferopol raided his and seven other homes in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi. During one raid, officers put a 78-year-old man – deported to Siberia by the Soviet Union for his faith when he was 9 – up against a wall and handcuffed him (see below).

On 16 November, FSB Investigator Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin ordered Filatov to sign a pledge not to leave Dzhankoi without his specific permission. Lieutenant Chumakin is investigating the 46-year-old Filatov under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1, who faces up to 10 years' imprisonment if convicted. Lieutenant Chumakin refused to talk to Forum 18 (see below).

"I no longer meet my friends because it might cause them problems," Filatov told Forum 18. "We simply ask the authorities to respect our rights to meet together and read the Bible. We're not law-breakers and we're not against the government" (see below).

### ***"Extremist" organisations banned***

Russia's Supreme Court banned Tabligh Jamaat as "extremist" in 2009. The Russian ban was imposed in Crimea after Russia annexed the peninsula from Ukraine in March 2014.

Russia's Supreme Court banned Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremist" in 2017. Prosecutors in Russia are investigating more than 90 individuals on "extremism"-related criminal charges. Of them, 25 were in pre-trial detention as of 19 November, Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

Following Russia's occupation of Crimea, the Russian authorities granted re-registration to Jehovah's Witness communities in Crimea, only to ban them following the Russian Supreme Court ban.

## ***Annexation, restrictions imposed***

Ukraine and the international community do not recognise Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea. The peninsula is now divided between two Russian federal regions, the Republic of Crimea (with its capital in Simferopol) and the port city of Sevastopol.

After the annexation Russia imposed its restrictions on freedom of religion and belief. Many religious communities have been raided, and many individuals have been fined for possessing books – such as the Muslim prayer collection “Fortress of a Muslim” – which have been banned as “extremist” in Russia. Religious communities and individuals continue to be fined for not displaying the full name of their registered religious organisation at their place of worship, for meeting for worship without Russian state permission or advertising their faith.

## ***Muslim Supreme Court trial imminent***

Crimea's Supreme Court is about to begin the trial of four Muslim men accused of membership of the banned Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, a court official told Forum 18 from Simferopol on 28 November. The four facing trial on charges connected with “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” are:

1) Renat Rustemovich Suleimanov (born 30 August 1969), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1.

2) Talyat Abdurakhmanov (born 1953), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2.

3) Seiran Rizaevich Mustafaev (born 2 January 1969), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2.

4) Arsen Shakirovich Kubedinov (born 6 August 1974), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2.

Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 punishes “Organisation of” and Part 2 punishes “participation in” “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”.

Suleimanov faces a maximum 10-year jail term if convicted of organising such activity. The other three face a maximum 6-year jail term each if convicted of participating in such activity.

### ***Raids, four Muslims arrested***

Russia’s FSB security service launched criminal cases against the four Crimean Tatar Muslims on 29 September 2017. Masked men raided their homes early on 2 October 2017, local human rights defenders and media reported.

The lawyer Edem Smedlyayev first noted the search and arrest of one of the men, Suleimanov, in his home village of Molodezhnoe just north of Crimea's capital Simferopol. FSB officers and OMON riot police arrived at 6 am as he was returning from early prayers at the mosque. After showing a search warrant about 20 officers raided the house, looking through all the rooms.

"All the men were in masks and all the official cars had their number plates removed," the lawyer Smedlyayev wrote on his Facebook page. "So it was unknown who had taken him or where."

Officers seized a computer, as well as five copies of three Muslim books from Suleimanov's home. The books were by two members of the Kandahlawi family, key figures in the Tabligh Jamaat movement. Two of the three titles have been banned as "extremist" by Russian courts.

Suleimanov is married with three young daughters. "Of course he's in shock, when they grabbed him at 6 o'clock in the morning," his lawyer Smedlyayev told Radio Free Europe on the day of the arrest. He said Suleimanov denied having organised or being involved in any extremist organisation and was therefore happy to answer investigators' questions.

The same morning officers raided the homes of and detained three other Muslims. At 6 am, men in balaclavas raided the home of Abdurakhmanov in the village of Melnichnoe in central Crimea, Abdureshit Dzhepparov of the Crimean Contact Group for Human Rights told Radio Free Europe's Krym Reali.

Abdurakhmanov has difficulties with his hearing.

Also on 2 October 2017, officers raided the home of Kubedinov in Simferopol and detained him. Kubedinov is married with four children, the oldest of whom is now 11. Officers raided the home of Mustafaev in the village of Pionerskoe, south east of Simferopol, and detained him.

At hearings on 3 October 2017 at Simferopol's Kiev District Court, Judge Viktor Mozhelyansky acceded to the prosecutor's requests that Suleimanov, Abdurakhmanov and Kubedinov be held in pre-trial detention until 29 November 2017, according to court records. The Judge rejected pleas by lawyers for the three men to have them held under house arrest. The Judge ordered that Mustafaev be held under house arrest.

The requests to hold the four men had been presented to court by FSB Investigator R. Gorbachev, according to court records. He had opened criminal cases against all four men under Article 282.2, Part 1. Later the accusation was changed for Abdurakhmanov, Kubedinov and Mustafaev to Article 282.2, Part 2.

In November 2017, Abdurakhmanov was freed from Simferopol's Investigation Prison. He was instead required to sign a pledge not to leave his town without permission from the investigator.

On 22 February 2018, Kubedinov was freed from investigation prison in Simferopol. He was instead required to sign a pledge

not to leave his town without permission from the investigator, his lawyer Jemil Temeshev announced.

This left only Suleimanov in Simferopol's Investigation Prison. His lawyers repeatedly tried to challenge his continued pre-trial detention, appealing to Crimea's Supreme Court against Kiev District Court extensions to the detention. However, each time the appeals were rejected, according to court decisions seen by Forum 18.

During the one-year investigation, FSB Investigator Gorbachev was replaced by another investigator, those close to the case told Forum 18. The case was then handed to Crimea's Prosecutor's Office, where it was assigned to Deputy Prosecutor Sergei Bulgakov.

Officials at Crimea's Prosecutor's Office refused to put Forum 18 through to Prosecutor Bulgakov on 26 November.

### ***Indictment rejected – then accepted***

On 14 September 2018 – 50 weeks or almost one year after the FSB launched the criminal case against the four Muslims – Prosecutor Bulgakov handed the case to Crimea's Supreme Court for trial. However at the preliminary hearing on 27 September, presided over by Judge Andrei Paly, the indictment was found to have been “completed with violations of the provisions of the Code” and ordered sent back to the Prosecutor for further work, according to court records.

Prosecutor Bulgakov challenged Judge Paly's decision. On 21 November, Judge Aleksey Kozyrev of Crimea's Supreme Court upheld the challenge, according to court records. This cleared the way for the trial to go ahead.

The case is now being assigned to a Judge and a date for the preliminary hearing is now being set, a court official told Forum 18 on 28 November.

### ***First Jehovah's Witness criminal charges***

The first individual to face "extremism"-related criminal charges linked to the Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea is 46-year-old Sergei Viktorovich Filatov. He headed the Sivash Jehovah's Witness community in the town of Dzhankoi, one of two Jehovah's Witness communities in the town registered by the Russian authorities in April 2015. Both communities were liquidated through the courts in May 2017 following the Russian Supreme Court ban, according to Russian Federal Tax Service records.

Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin of the FSB security service in Simferopol opened the criminal case against Filatov on 14 November under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of 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"). Filatov faces a maximum 10-year jail term if convicted.

The man who answered FSB Lieutenant Chumakin's phone on 27 November repeatedly insisted it was a wrong number and put the phone down.

### ***Eight coordinated raids***

On the evening of 15 November, about 10 groups of FSB officers, OMON riot police and possibly officers of other agencies who had come from Simferopol raided the homes in Dzhankoi of eight families who were members of the two local Jehovah's Witness communities before they were banned in 2017.

"I was out when they arrived at my home, but they had handcuffed my 21-year-old son," Filatov told Forum 18 from Dzhankoi on 26 November. "I saw about 25 men out on the street, in three cars, and in my home. I counted them at one point. No violence was used in my case and officers behaved more or less correctly."

However, Filatov expressed concern about the treatment of another whose home was raided, 78-year-old Aleksandr Ursu. The raiders pushed him up against a wall, during which he fell to his knees. Officers then handcuffed him.

In 1949 Ursu was among hundreds of Jehovah's Witnesses deported to Siberia from his native Moldova with his family as a 9-year-old boy to punish them for their faith. "The whole time you felt hunger," he recalls of the deportation. The

Soviet authorities “rehabilitated” him in 1991, finding that he had been unjustly punished four decades earlier.

The FSB appear so far to have initiated a criminal case only against Filatov. On 16 November, Lieutenant Chumakin ordered Filatov to sign a pledge not to leave Dzhankoi without his specific authorisation, Filatov told Forum 18.

Filatov said since the ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses across Crimea, their Kingdom Halls lie empty. “We’re not allowed to use them,” he told Forum 18. “I read the Bible together with my family.”

The criminal case against him has had an intimidating effect. “I no longer meet my friends,” Filatov added, “because it might cause them problems. We simply ask the authorities to respect our rights to meet together and read the Bible. We’re not law-breakers and we’re not against the government.”

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