

UKRAINE-CRIMEA-RUSSIA: Inver Bekirov: 'If a Muslim observes his faith, the FSB makes him a terrorist'



Inver Bekirov during a court hearing – Photo Anton Naumlyk

By Halya Coynash

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (11.11.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2pfvzN3> – A Russian prosecutor has demanded a record 20.5 year sentence against 55-year-old Crimean Tatar Inver Bekirov because the latter discussed religious issues with friends at the school where he worked as a guard. His lawyer, Sergei Novikov has repeatedly criticised the shoddy indictment in which neither the time, nor the place of Bekirov's alleged 'crime' are specified, and in which his impugned activities have nothing at all to do with the

'terrorist' charges laid.

The 'terrorism' charges against him and five other Ukrainian Muslims are based solely on a highly suspect Russian Supreme Court ruling from 2003 which declared the peaceful pan-Islamist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir 'terrorist'. The court provided no grounds and acted in secret, with human rights groups only learning of the ruling after it was too late to appeal it. Hizb ut-Tahrir is legal in Ukraine and most countries, and Russia is totally alone in calling it 'terrorist'.

During a court hearing in April 2019, Bekirov gave a succinct description of the flawed charges against him and the other men.

"I would like to draw the court's attention to the fact that our prosecution has been fabricated by the FSB. This includes the widespread method of blurring concepts. If, for example, a Muslim practises his religion, he becomes a 'potential terrorist'. Talking about Islam is 'recruitment' and stopping a person from committing sins is 'encouraging tendentious thinking'. If a person begins to follow his religion, he's part of a 'cell'. You officially buy Muslim literature in a shop, and they claim that you deliberately knew and 'kept prohibited literature in your home". In Ukraine, when they prohibited books in Russian, the media and certain politicians began shouting that 'this is fascism'. When in Russia they began prohibiting Muslim literature, the question must arise what that is?"

Bekirov is the oldest of the six men from the Yalta region on 'trial' at a military court in Rostov-on-Don. He is married with three grown daughters and a grandson. He was arrested, together with human rights activist Emir-Usein Kuku; Muslim Aliev and Vadim Siruk after armed and unnecessarily rough searches of their homes on 11 February 2016.

This initially seemed a remake of the FSB's first Crimean prosecution of Ukrainian Muslims for totally unproven 'involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir'. Each had one person designated 'organizer' of a Hizb ut-Tahrir cell', under Article 205.5 § 1 of Russia's criminal code, with this carrying a possible life sentence. The other three were accused of 'involvement' in such a supposed cell, under Article 205.5 § 2 (10-20 years). These appalling sentences are purely because Russia has labelled Hizb ut-Tahrir 'terrorist'. There is no evidence that Hizb ut-Tahrir has been guilty of any act of terrorism anywhere in the world, and none of the men is accused of any actual crime. Indeed, despite the Supreme Court ruling, it was only in 2013 that Russia began prosecuting people under terrorism legislation and handing down horrific sentences.

Unlike the arrest of the first four Muslims from Sevastopol at the beginning of 2015, the Yalta arrests did attract international attention, mainly because of Kuku's involvement in a human rights organization and previous harassment by the occupation regime. It also became clear that the same former Ukrainian turncoat, now working for the FSB, Alexander Kompaneitsev had played a thoroughly sinister and illegal role in the persecution of Kuku, Bekirov and two young men arrested on 18 April 2016: Bekirov's nephew, Refat Alimov and Arsen Dzheparov. Bekirov had been directly threatened that if he refused to give false testimony against the other men, his

nephew would be arrested.

Neither in this prosecution, nor others of Ukrainian Muslims, has even one defendant agreed to 'cooperate' with the FSB. It was quite likely in revenge for their refusal to be broken that, in January 2017, a new change, under 278 of Russia's criminal code, of "attempting violent seizure of power in Russia" was added, with this carrying a near-guaranteed increase in sentence of from 12 to 20 years.

All Russia's Hizb ut-Tahrir 'trials' are profoundly flawed, however this one stood out for the number of overt and identifiable falsifications. It was possibly because a 'secret witness' was uncovered, together with the torture almost certainly used to obtain his 'testimony' that the first attempt at a trial was aborted, with the case sent back to the prosecutor.

Certainly the excuse given for sending the case back was extraordinarily lawless. In August 2018, the Rostov court suddenly announced that it was returning the case to the prosecutor, demanding that the charges against Bekirov be made more severe. Forget justice being blind and judges – impartial arbiters. Here the judges made it abundantly clear that they were working directly with the prosecution.

In explaining why Bekirov should now also face the more serious charges of 'organizing a Hizb ut-Tahrir cell', the court claimed that the illicit recording made in the school where Bekirov worked indicated that Bekirov could be said to have organized meetings and given the other defendants

instructions.

Whatever the real reasons for aborting the first trial, the decision officially taken by presiding judge **Nikolai Yurevich Vasilchuk**, together with **Valery Sergeevich Opanasenko** and **Stanislav Vladimirovich Zhidkov** has led to a situation where Bekirov is facing a sentence long and harsh enough to make it a likely death sentence.

Please write to Enver Bekirov; Muslim Aliev; Refat Alimov; Arsen Dzhapparov; Emir-Usein Kuku; and Vadim Siruk.

The letters tell them they are not forgotten, and show Moscow that the 'trial' now underway is being followed.

Letters need to be in Russian, and on 'safe' subjects. If that is a problem, use the sample letter below (copying it by hand), perhaps adding a picture or photo. Do add a return address so that the men can answer.

Example letter

Привет,

Желаю Вам здоровья, мужества и терпения, надеюсь на скорое освобождение. Простите, что мало пишу – мне трудно писать по-русски, но мы все о Вас помним.

[Hi. I wish you good health, courage and patience and hope that you will soon be released. I'm sorry that this letter is short – it's hard for me to write in Russian., but you are not forgotten.]

Addresses

The men have been split up, with Aliev and Kuku in SIZO-4, the other men in SIZO-1 (the differences are small, so please copy carefully). The address each time, should have the man's full name, and year of birth.

Enver Bekirov

344010, Россия, Ростов-на-Дону, ул. Максима Горького, 219
СИЗО-1.

Бекирову, Энверу Небиевичу, 1963 г.р

[In English: 344010 Russian Federation, Rostov on the Don,
219 Maxim Gorky St, SIZO-1

Bekirov, Enver Nebiyevich, b. 1963]

MuslimAliev

344082 Россия, Ростов-на-Дону, Большая Садовая ул., 31

Алиеву, Муслиму Нуриевичу, 1971 г.р.

[In English: 344082 Russia, Rostov on the Don, 31 Bolshaya
Sadovaya St., SIZO-4

Aliev, Muslim Nurievich, b. 1971]

Refat Alimov

344010, Россия, Ростов-на-Дону, ул. Максима Горького, 219
СИЗО-1.

Алимову, Рефату Маметовичу, 1991 г.р.

[In English: 344010 Russian Federation, Rostov on the Don,
219 Maxim Gorky St, SIZO-1

Alimov, Refat Mametovich, b. 1991]

Arsen Dzhepparov

344010, Россия, Ростов-на-Дону, ул. Максима Горького, 219
СИЗО-1.

Джеппарову, Арсену Бармамбетовичу, 1991 г.р.

[In English: 344010 Russian Federation, Rostov on the Don,
219 Maxim Gorky St, SIZO-1

Dzhepparov, Arsen Barmambetovich, b. 1991]

Emir-Usein Kuku

344082 Россия, Ростов-на-Дону, Большая Садовая ул., 31

Куку, Эмиру-Усеину Кемаловичу, 1976 г.р.

[In English: 344082 Russia, Rostov on the Don, 31 Bolshaya Sadovaya St., SIZO-4

Kuku, Emir-Usein Kemalovich, b. 1976]

VadimSiruk

344010, Россия, Ростов-на-Дону, ул. Максима Горького, 219 СИЗО-1.

Сируку, Вадиму Андреевичу, 1989 г.р.

[In English: 344010 Russian Federation, Rostov on the Don, 219 Maxim Gorky St, SIZO-1

Siruk, Vadim Andreevich, b. 1989]

Ukraine church's only temple in occupied Crimea plundered

Church property was destroyed under the pretext of "repair works" allegedly conducted by the occupying authorities.

UNIAN (25.07.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2JSnx4f> – Simferopol's Volodymyr and Olha Cathedral, the only temple of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine that is left in the occupied Crimea, has been looted and plundered, the Crimean Human Rights Group

reported citing Archbishop of the OCU's Crimean Diocese, Klyment.

The cleric noted that all church property belonging to the Crimea Diocese's Administration has been stolen, Krym.Realii reports.

The archbishop said that the "minister of property and land relations" of the occupied Crimea, Anna Anyuhina stood behind the plundering of the church disguised as "internal repairs", all while Klyment set off to Washington to attend a conference on religious freedom.

Human rights activists recalled that on June 8, the "arbitration court" of Crimea ruled to terminate the lease of premises, which before the occupation was concluded with the Crimean Diocese of the then-Kyiv Patriarchate (the entity that in December 2018 was dissolved in favor of founding the Orthodox Church of Ukraine).

The "court" obliged the church to return the premises to the Crimean occupation authorities and pay RUB 12,000 in duties to the Federal budget of the Russian Federation. The formal reason for contract termination was the debt worth UAH 2.3 (approximately 9 U.S. cents).

It is noted that the Crimean Human Rights Group for several years has been fixing the facts of Russian occupation authorities in Crimea systematically violating religious freedoms.

The Group's leader, Olha Skrypnyk, stressed that during the occupation period, almost all religious communities and organizations were subjected to harassment, restrictions, and persecution, except for the church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

RUSSIA/ UKRAINE-CRIMEA: Five Crimean Tatars sentenced to 68 years for peacefully practising their faith in Russian-occupied Crimea

KHPG.org (19.06.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2IvajtH> – There had never been any terrorist attacks in Crimea before 2014, nor have there been any since, yet Russia began arresting and sentencing Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians to horrifically long sentences on 'terrorism' charges within months of its invasion and annexation of the peninsula. A Russian court has now sentenced five Crimean Tatars to a total of 68 years for alleged 'involvement' in a totally peaceful movement which is legal in Ukraine. Not one of the men was accused of anything that could remotely be considered a crime in any democratic country, nor was any real evidence provided to back the charges of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir. None was effectively required, since the 'trial' was held at the Northern Caucasus District Military Court whose judges first gained notoriety for their politically motivated sentences against Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov and civic activist

Oleksandr Kolchenko.

The five Crimean Tatars are from Stroganovka, near Simferopol, and were arrested on 12 October 2016. As in all such 'Hizb ut-Tahrir' cases, the FSB designates at least one person as 'organizer' of a supposed Hizb ut-Tahrir 'cell' (under Article 205.5 § 1 of the Russian criminal code), while the others are charged with 'involvement' in the 'cell' (Article 205.5 § 2). Who is dubbed 'organizer', who 'involved' always seem very arbitrary, with the main difference in the severity of the prison sentence. In this case, 44-year-old Teymur Abdullaev was sentenced to 17 years' His brother, Useir Abdullaev to 13 years; Rustem Ismailov – 14 years; and Emil Dzemadenov and Aider Saledinov to 12 years. Three of the lower sentences were actually one year higher than those asked for by the prosecutor. Two of the three judges in this case, Anatoly Kolesnik (presiding judge); Igor Kostin and Edward Korobenko, had already taken part in at least one other 'trial' where men who had committed no crime at all were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in the harshest of Russian prison colonies.

Russia's Hizb ut-Tahrir prosecutions have been aptly called a conveyor belt of repression, with the Russian FSB using the same format for the charges, very often the same entirely unqualified 'experts', and secret witnesses. Even with obliging 'experts' willing to find 'extremism' in the simplest of statements, and people whose testimony and credentials cannot be verified, the prosecution still came up only with the vaguest of allegations. All were essentially charged with holding conversations on religious subjects, with the dodgy 'experts' alleging that a word here, or there 'proved' that the men belonged to Hizb ut-Tahrir.

As well-known Ukrainian historian Gulnara Bekirova says, it is impossible not to feel intense outrage at the flagrant injustice meted out. “Crimean Tatars, Muslims who lived in their own native land in Crimea, who were raising their children and, most importantly, had not committed any crimes, have received sentences which the most dangerous criminals in Russia do not get. “

Russia’s Supreme Court declared Hizb ut-Tahrir to be a ‘terrorist’ organization in 2003, in an effectively secret session, which Hizb ut-Tahrir representatives and human rights groups were informed about only much later, after it was impossible to appeal the decision. No sensible grounds were given, and there is nothing to suggest that Hizb ut-Tahrir has ever committed any act of terrorism or violence anywhere in the world.

It is especially telling that until 2014, there were prosecutions because of this Supreme Court judgement, but people were not given prison sentences. What changed in 2014 was that Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, began its military aggression against Eastern Ukraine and a major information war, which clearly required an FSB that was supposedly ‘fighting terrorism and extremism’. Hizb ut-Tahrir prosecutions are known to bring the FSB ‘investigators’ promotion or other benefits (details here).

All the trials of Crimean Tatars and other Ukrainians since Russia’s invasion in 2014 have borne a terrifying similarity to the ‘trials’ in Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union. While the victims are no longer simply executed, the charges are generally surreal and totally unrelated to any normal understanding, not just of what terrorism is, but what the law

is there to regulate. Most ominously, there is an entire repressive machine in which FSB officers, the prosecutor's office and judges take part in imprisoning men for decades, and shattering whole families.

The five Crimean Tatars sentenced on 18 June 2019 are all well-educated men and devout Muslims, who lived law-abiding lives, bringing up their young families. Many of the 18 children whose fathers have been taken from them were themselves present and deeply traumatized when armed and masked men burst into their homes three years ago. If Russia has its way, and they must not, these children will be adults before they see their fathers again. Like other Ukrainian political prisoners, they will be sent far from their homes and families, in one of the numerous violations of the European Court of Human Rights seen in these cases.

All five men have long been recognized by the renowned Memorial Human Rights Centre as political prisoners. Memorial has long condemned Russia's use of 'terrorist' charges which have no foundation, and points also to the grave breach of international law since Russia has no right to apply its repressive legislation on illegally occupied territory.

HRWF Comment

According to the European Court, Hizb ut-Tahrir is not a religious organization but a political party. It is not violent and does not incite to violence. However, the European Court dismissed a complaint by Hizb ut-Tahrir against their ban in Germany because it advocates the overthrow of non-Islamic governments and the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. The Court also held in particular that under

Article 17 (prohibition of abuse of rights) of the European Convention on Human Rights, it was impossible to derive from the Convention a right to engage in an activity aimed at destroying any of the rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention.

See: <https://www.strasbourgconsortium.org/portal.case.php?pageId=10#caseId=874>

RUSSIA / UKRAINE-CRIMEA: Raids, another criminal case, four appeals

By Felix Corley

Forum18 (02.04.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2YPAH7g>– On 20 March, armed Russian FSB security service officers raided at least six Jehovah's Witness homes in the southern Crimean city of Yalta and the nearby suburb of Alupka. At least one of the FSB officers was carrying what appeared to be an assault rifle over his shoulder, despite Jehovah's Witnesses known for being pacifist. Officers seized religious literature, money and other documents, and took several people for interrogation.

FSB officers seized Jehovah's Witness literature, much of which has been banned as "extremist" in Russia. However, they also seized Bible translations and a Bible concordance used by

Russian Orthodox, Protestants and others and which the Russian authorities have not banned (see below).

The Crimean branch of the Russian FSB launched a criminal case against 34-year-old Yalta resident Artem Gerasimov. If eventually tried and convicted, he faces up to ten years' imprisonment. He has had to sign a pledge not to leave his home town as the FSB investigates the case against him (see below).

Gerasimov is the second Jehovah's Witness in Crimea facing investigation 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").

One of the FSB Investigators refused to discuss the case against Gerasimov with Forum 18 (see below).

The Russian FSB is still investigating the criminal case launched in November 2018 against 46-year-old fellow Crimean Jehovah's Witness Sergei Filatov. The launching of the criminal case was accompanied by coordinated raids on eight Jehovah's Witness family homes in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi involving an estimated 200 officers. One elderly Jehovah's Witness was tortured, while a young woman suffered a miscarriage soon after the raid (see below).

In January, Crimea's Supreme Court rejected challenges to their legality from three victims of the raids (see below).

Meanwhile, four Muslims convicted in January of membership of the banned Muslim missionary movement Tabligh Jamaat have appealed to Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow. Renat Suleimanov was jailed for four years, while the other three were given suspended sentences. The Supreme Court is due to begin hearing the appeals on the morning of 16 April (see below).

The four men had met in mosques to discuss their faith and denied meeting conspiratorially or promoting "extremism" (see below).

Suleimanov's lawyer told Forum 18 his client, who is 49, has refused to go to Moscow for the appeal hearing, saying he is too ill to travel all that distance. Suleimanov – who has been held since his October 2017 arrest – is still being held in Simferopol's Investigation Prison (see below).

"Extremist" organisations banned

Ukraine and the international community do not recognise Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea. 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.

Russia's Supreme Court banned the Tabligh Jamaat missionary movement as "extremist" in 2009.

Russia's Supreme Court banned Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremist" in 2017. Prosecutors in Russia are investigating nearly 150 individuals on "extremism"-related criminal charges. Of these, at least 25 are in pre-trial detention and 26 under house arrest as of 2 April 2019. Others have had to sign pledges not to leave their home town without permission.

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.

Raid, interrogations, confiscations

On 20 March, armed Russian FSB security service officers raided at least six Jehovah's Witness homes in the southern Crimean city of Yalta and the nearby suburb of Alupka. Officers seized religious literature, money and other documents, and took several people for interrogation.

FSB attention focused on Yalta resident Artem Vyacheslavovich Gerasimov (born 13 January 1985). FSB officers took him for interrogation to Simferopol, a two-hour drive away, Jehovah's Witnesses told Forum 18.

The FSB announced the same day that during the raids its officers had seized religious literature “banned in Russia”, computers and other equipment and money, some of it in foreign currency.

FSB video of two of the raids – released to the local media – shows officers in camouflage with FSB in large letters on the back of their uniforms and individuals in civilian clothes raiding Gerasimov’s and one other home. One of the FSB officers raiding Gerasimov’s home appears to be carrying an infantry assault rifle over his shoulder (Jehovah’s Witnesses are known to be pacifists). Most of the intruders are wearing masks covering their faces except for the eyes.

Officers place religious literature on a bed. Some of the titles are Jehovah’s Witness publications, such as their “New World” version of the Bible, which Russia banned as “extremist” in 2017. Others however are Bible translations and a Bible concordance used by Russian Orthodox, Protestants and others and which have not been banned.

Criminal case

Following the 20 March raids, the Crimean branch of the Russian FSB security service issued a statement to the local media. “It was established that a 34-year-old inhabitant of Yalta organised the activity of the local Jehovah’s Witness organisation, conducted meetings, religious events and propaganda of the ideas of the given religious sect, as well as attracting new adherents to its ranks.”

The FSB announced that it had launched a case against one individual (whom it did not name) under 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”).

The FSB released Gerasimov later in the day after he signed a pledge not to leave his home town without permission from the FSB Investigator. He was allowed to return to his home in Yalta, Jehovah’s Witnesses told Forum 18.

The criminal case against Gerasimov is being led by FSB investigators Aleksandr Lavrov and Sergei Bosiev. Forum 18 reached Investigator Bosiev at the FSB headquarters in Simferopol on 1 April, but as soon as it had introduced itself he put the phone down.

First criminal investigation continues

The Russian FSB security service is still investigating the criminal case against Jehovah’s Witness Sergei Viktorovich Filatov (born 6 June 1972) in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi on the same “extremism”-related charges. He too faces a maximum possible prison term of ten years under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1.

The criminal case – which the FSB launched on 10 November 2018 – was the first against Jehovah’s Witnesses in occupied

Crimea. Like Gerasimov, Filatov had to sign a pledge not to leave his home town.

“Interrogations of Sergei are continuing,” Jehovah’s Witnesses told Forum 18. The FSB security service commissioned five “expert analyses”. Only one – to study the characteristics of his voice – has been completed, they added. This implies that the FSB has recordings that they believe are of Filatov.

The FSB investigator Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin in Simferopol – who is leading the investigation of Filatov’s case – again refused to talk to Forum 18 on 2 April.

Five days after the criminal case was opened, about 10 groups of FSB security service and OMON riot police officers from Simferopol raided Filatov’s and seven other homes in Dzhankoi. During the raid on one home, officers beat the 78-year-old Viktor Ursu – deported to Siberia by the Soviet Union for his faith when he was 9 – put him up against a wall and handcuffed him. Soon after a raid on another home, a young woman suffered a miscarriage which Jehovah’s Witnesses say was caused by stress.

Filatov tried to challenge the case against him, but Crimea’s Supreme Court rejected these challenges in November 2018.

On 17 January 2019, and despite not having been convicted of any crime, Filatov was added to the Rosfinmonitoring “List of Terrorists and Extremists”, whose assets banks are obliged to freeze (although small transactions are permitted).

Crimean Supreme Court rejects challenges to raids

Three other Jehovah's Witnesses whose homes were raided in November 2018 tried to challenge their legality.

Court decisions seen by Forum 18 reveal that FSB investigator Lieutenant Chumakin sought permission from Simferopol's Kiev District Court on 14 November 2018 for the raids "with the aim of finding items of significance for the criminal case" against Filatov.

Viktor Ursu (beaten and handcuffed during the raid and hospitalised afterwards), Liliya Bezhenar (whose husband Vladimir had to be hospitalised with a suspected stroke) and Vladimir Ostapchuk lodged suits against the search warrants on 11 January 2019 to Crimea's Supreme Court. However, in separate hearings on 31 January, Judge Alla Ovchinnikova rejected all three suits, according to the decisions seen by Forum 18.

Anna Turobova from the Crimean Prosecutor's Office in Simferopol led the case in court to reject the three victims' suits. Her telephone went unanswered each time Forum 18 tried to reach her on 2 April.

Moscow appeal for four convicted Muslims

The appeals of four Muslims convicted in January on charges of alleged membership of the Muslim missionary movement Tabligh Jamaat are due to begin at Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow at 10 am on 16 April, according to the court website.

The appeal is due to be heard at Russia's Supreme Court as it is the next level up from the men's original conviction at Crimea's Supreme Court in Simferopol.

The four men met openly in mosques to discuss their faith. "At lessons we studied ayats [verses] from the Koran, the value of praying the namaz, and the zikr [reciting devotional phrases as a reminder of Allah]," one of the men Talyat Abdurakhmanov told the court at their trial. "These lessons were not conspiratorial and took place in mosques."

On 22 January, at the end of their trial, Judge Sergei Pogrebnyak convicted the men under Criminal Code Article 282.2. This punishes organisation of or involvement 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".

1) Renat Rustemovich Suleimanov (born 30 August 1969), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1, four years' imprisonment in an ordinary regime labour camp, followed by one year under restrictions.

2) Talyat Abdurakhmanov (born 1953), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2, two and a half years' suspended

sentence, with a two year probation period, plus one year under restrictions.

3) Seiran Rizaevich Mustafaev (born 2 January 1969), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2, two and a half years' suspended sentence, with a two year probation period, plus one year under restrictions.

4) Arsen Shekirovich Kubedinov (born 6 August 1974), Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2, two and a half years' suspended sentence, with a two year probation period, plus one year under restrictions.

All four of those convicted lodged appeals to Russia's Supreme Court on 11 March. Two days later, the court assigned the appeals to a judge from the fourth criminal division.

Suleimanov's lawyer, Aleksandr Lesovoi, told Forum 18 from Simferopol on 1 April that his client has refused to go to Moscow for the appeal hearing, saying he is too ill to travel all that distance.

18 months in Investigation Prison already

Suleimanov has been held since his October 2017 arrest in Simferopol's Investigation Prison. Until his appeal is decided, he is still deemed to be in pre-trial detention. During this time, each day of detention counts as a day and a half of his prison term.

Asked if Suleimanov has access to the Koran and is able to

pray freely in prison, his lawyer Lesovoi responded: "He hasn't complained."

Suleimanov's address in Investigation Prison:

295006 Krym

g. Simferopol

Bulvar Lenina 4

Sledstvenny Izolyator No. 1

Suleimanovu Renatu Rustemovichu

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UKRAINE – CRIMEA: In Crimea, a criminal case under Article 205.5 has been opened

Searches were conducted in the homes of five Muslims

SOVA (12.10.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2ejNaJ9> – On 12th October 2016, in the Art Institute in Kamenka (a Simferopol Suburb), police conducted raids on the homes of five Muslim men who had recently returned from the Hajj in Mecca and detained at least three of them under suspicion of collaborating with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

The searches were carried out in the framework of the criminal case initiated under Art. 205.5 of the criminal code (Organizing the activities of a terrorist organization and participating in the activities of such an organization).

The following persons are suspected of collaboration with the group “Hizb ut-Tahrir”, which is banned in Russia:

Timur Abdullaev (ch. 1, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code),
Uzeyir Abdullayev (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code),
Rustem Ismailov (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code),
Eider Saledinova (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code)
and Emil Dzhemadenova (ch. 2, Art. 205.5 of the criminal code).

Let it be known that we believe that the prosecution of member of “Hizb ut-Tahrir”, the propaganda of terrorism only on the basis of party activities such as meeting and reading literature related to Islam and the Russian pursuit of their anti-terrorist articles are an unlawful oppression of the Muslim people.

(Translation Russian-English by Olga Vladimirovna Allen for HRWF)