

Existence of Jehovah's Witnesses under threat in Russia

HRWF (18.05.2016) – The existence of Jehovah's Witnesses is increasingly under threat in Russia. This peaceful and apolitical movement is repeatedly accused of extremism, its publications are censored and its members are sentenced to huge fines.

Orel congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses may be liquidated as extremist

SOVA Center (13.05.2016) - The territorial administration of the Ministry of Justice has asked a court to find the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Orel to be extremist.

On 12 May 2016 the department of the Russian Ministry of Justice for Orel province filed in provincial court a petition for the liquidation of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses "Orel" for conducting extremist activity. On the same day it suspended the activity of the congregation until consideration by the court of the question of its liquidation.

At the present time, organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia have been ruled extremist in Taganrog, Samara, and Abinsk of Krasnodar territory, while in Taganrog 16 of its members were convicted for continuation of activity of the congregation. A provincial court issued decisions for the liquidation of congregations in Belgorod and Sary Oskol, and a petition for finding the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Arkhangelsk extremist is being considered. The prosecutor's office of Cherkessk also intended to seek the liquidation of the local organization in 2015. The attempt to close the congregation in Gorno-Altaysk ended unsuccessfully for the prosecutor's office and the decision to liquidate the Tiumen organization of Jehovah's Witnesses was quashed by the Supreme Court. The first to be liquidated was the Moscow congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in 2004, where the process began back before the adoption of the law "On combating extremist activity." The congregation managed to register again only in 2015.

We view attempts to liquidate organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses for extremism and the prosecution of members of their congregations and prohibition of texts as religious discrimination.

Jehovah's Witness leader loses appeal of conviction for extremism

HRWF (17.05.2016) - Between 20 to 30 December 2015, the chairman of the Kirovo-Chepetsk religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Pinegin published on his page in the social network Odnoklassniki a link to a website that in 2013 and 2014 was ruled in Russia to be extremist and included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials.

Roman Pinegin was accused of conducting propaganda of destructive religious teaching that aimed at arousing hatred or hostility toward representatives of traditional confessions and the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church.

By decision of the Kirovo-Chepetsk district court of 16 February 2016, Roman Pinegin was held administratively accountable in accordance with article 20.29 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Law of the RF, "production and distribution of extremist materials." He was fined 2,000 rubles without confiscation.

However the defendant did not agree with the decision of the Kirovo-Chepetsk court. He sent an appeal to the Kirov provincial court for reversal of the ruling. The reason was the absence of the essence of a crime.

In April 2016, by decision of the Kirov provincial court, the appeal of Roman Pinegin was dismissed and the ruling of the Kirovo-Chepetsk district court was left without change.

In March public figures of Kirov sent an appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin with the request to ban by judicial process the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses on the territory of Kirov province.