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Russia: Over a hundred believers of several faiths behind bars

By Willy Fautré, director of *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

Our World (18.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2QyzizS> - Russia is the only country on the European continent that imprisons people for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of religion. This issue was at the heart of the statement of Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) at Session 7 of the OSCE/ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw on 19 September 2019.

As of 1 September, HRWF's Database of Religious Prisoners included 73 documented cases of detention (both pretrial and post-conviction) in Russia: 62 Jehovah's Witnesses, 2 Mormons, 2 Scientologists, 5 followers of Said Nursi, 1 Tabligh Jamaat Muslim and 1

Sunni Muslim in Crimea. A few Jehovah's Witnesses listed had been released and placed under house arrest, but the criminal charges against them were maintained.

According to the statement of the Crimean Human Rights Group at the OSCE/ODIHR, 36 Tatar Muslims were accused of religious extremism and terrorism, and subsequently deprived of their freedom.

Followers of the late Turkish theologian Said Nursi are serving prison terms ranging from three to eight years for being involved in a banned organization. One Tabligh Jamaat Muslim was arrested in 2017 for missionary activities and sentenced to four years in prison.

In March, two American Mormons were arrested and imprisoned for three weeks for allegedly carrying out missionary activities before being expelled from the country.

In 2017, five Scientologists were arrested for allegedly "participating in an extremist organization, inciting hatred and enmity, and violating human dignity" (Criminal Code Article 171 and Articles 282 and 282.1). Two years later, two of them were still in pre-trial detention.

On the same day as the OSCE/ ODIHR session devoted to freedom of religion or belief, six Jehovah's Witnesses from Saratov, whose movement was banned in 2017, were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to three years and six months for allegedly organizing activities of an extremist organization. Additionally, they were all banned from holding leadership positions in public organizations for a period of five years and restriction of freedom for one year.

On 6 February 2019, Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen living in Russia who was in pre-trial detention since 2017, was the first Jehovah's Witness in post-Soviet Russia to be sentenced for exercising his right to freedom of religion. He was condemned to 6 years in a labor camp for his alleged role – denied by himself and his congregation – in leading the local Jehovah's Witness branch in Oryol. His sentence was upheld by an appeals court three months later.

Russia is the only European country where peaceful believers are treated as criminals for reading their religious books in private, meeting for prayer and worship at home, teaching their faith to their children and sharing their beliefs with others.

As of 23 September 2019,

- 252 Jehovah's Witnesses ranging from 20 to 85 years old were facing criminal charges
- 42 were in detention (pretrial or prison)
- 23 were under house arrest

Concerns about human rights violations resulting from the Russian Supreme Court Ruling that banned Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017 have been raised by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the European Court of Human Rights and the European Union. The Government of the Russian Federation denies any human rights abuses, but their response lacks credibility. Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia are being massively arrested, detained in pre-trial detention and prosecuted because of their beliefs.

The EU has been very active in the defense of religious freedom in Russia, in particular concerning: the arrest and imprisonment of Dennis Christensen, the ban of the movement of Jehovah's Witnesses, the confiscation of all property belonging to 395 of

Jehovah's Witness congregations and the deprivation of the rights of 177,000 Jehovah's Witnesses to practice their religion.

At the OSCE/ODIHR conference, the EU representative reemphasised the EU's commitment to support freedom of religion or belief, stating:

"The EU focuses on the right of individuals, to believe or not to believe, and, alone or in community with others, to freely manifest their beliefs in public or in private, in worship, observance practice and teaching, without fear of intimidation, discrimination, violence or attack. Individuals have also the right to change one's religion or belief or to renounce it. The EU does not consider the merits of the different religions or beliefs, or the lack thereof, but ensures that the right to believe or not to believe is upheld."

Can homes now be freely used for worship meetings?

A Constitutional Court ruling may reduce fines for using private homes for meetings for worship. This largely relies on officials, one Christian lawyer stating that when he and his colleagues attempt to resolve cases "some [inspectors] work with common sense, others do not".

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (17.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2s1FeII> - A November 2019 Constitutional Court ruling will, lawyers hope, help to clarify Russia's confusing legal framework on meetings for worship outside officially-recognised religious buildings, and help both individuals and religious communities avoid fines. The Court stated that the provision of residential premises to religious organisations for worship and/or for use as a legal address "does not constitute a violation of the law and cannot serve as the basis for prosecuting citizens under Administrative Code Article 8.8" ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use").

The case followed a fine imposed on Olga Glamozdinova, a Seventh-day Adventist in Rostov Region, for granting free use of a room in her house to her Church and allowing them to use it as its legal address, when the land is designated for personal part-time crop cultivation. This land use permits the construction of a dwelling, but not of a religious building.

Glamozdinova argued that the house is also occupied as a dwelling by an acquaintance who also tends the crops on the plot, and the congregation uses the room for only four hours per week. The fine was upheld on appeal at both district and regional courts, but the Constitutional Court has now ruled that Glamozdinova's fine is subject to review because the law had been incorrectly applied in her case (see below).

The Court stated, however, that religious use of residential premises must take into account the rights and legitimate interests of residents and neighbours, and the requirements of health and safety and environmental protection legislation. The Court also stated that it would be "unacceptable" for a dwelling to lose the features of residential premises and acquire those of a religious or administrative building (see below).

This November 2019 Constitutional Court ruling may lead to fewer fines being imposed on religious organisations and individuals, but this will depend on Federal Service for

State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr) and other officials (who sometimes refer cases to Rosreestr) consciously taking a more nuanced approach.

Christian lawyer and human rights defender Vasily Nichik described in December how he and his colleagues meet Rosreestr inspectors and "present all the same arguments as in the courts" in an attempt to resolve cases. "Unfortunately, some [inspectors] work with common sense, others do not," he told Forum 18 (see below).

"Some words in the ruling do not have regulatory certainty," Nichik observed, "which leaves ample room for interpretation by state officials" (see below).

After previous Constitutional Court rulings affecting freedom of religion and belief, legal uncertainty remained and police and prosecutor's offices often fail to apply the Constitutional Court's rulings. These Constitutional Court rulings have nevertheless been used in court by defence lawyers and some judges to acquit those charged by prosecutors (see below).

Following the November 2019 Constitutional Court ruling, Rosreestr told Forum 18 that "when Rosreestr employees conduct inspections of compliance with land legislation on land plots used by religious organisations, the position of the Constitutional Court .. will be taken into account". It added that the ruling "has been sent to all territorial divisions of Rosreestr", and that, during inspections, staff will analyse whether a dwelling has lost the "signs of residential premises", as stipulated by the Constitutional Court (see below).

The ruling applies to all homes (the most common type of building used for meetings for worship), lawyer Sergei Chugunov explained to Forum 18, despite the Constitutional Court's focus on residential premises standing on "personal subsistence cultivation" plots. The ruling seems unlikely, however, to affect other types of premises, such as commercial buildings given or rented to religious associations to use for worship (see below).

The number of such fines relating to places of worship – 21 known fines in January to October 2019 – is relatively low, but has increased since 2016. One lawyer compared the legal situation to fining a driver whose passengers drink tea because a road is not designated for drinking tea (see below).

November 2019 Constitutional Court ruling

Both individuals and religious organisations risk being fined if they allow religious meetings, such as for worship, to take place on land not designated for this purpose – for instance, plots designated as being for "individual residential construction". Lawyers hope, however, that a November Constitutional Court ruling will help clarify Russia's confusing legal framework on meetings for worship outside officially-recognised religious buildings, and help both individuals and religious communities avoid fines.

On 14 November, the Constitutional Court stated that the provision of residential premises to religious organisations for worship and/or for use as a legal address "does not constitute a violation of the law and cannot serve as the basis for prosecuting citizens under Administrative Code Article 8.8" ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use").

The Court's examination of the constitutionality of Land Code Article 42 ("Duties of owners of land plots and persons who are not owners of land plots relating to the use of land plots") and Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 resulted from the case of Olga Glamozdinova, a Seventh-day Adventist in Rostov Region.

In September 2017, Rosreestr fined Glamozdinova 10,000 Roubles for granting free use of a room in her house to her Church, and allowing the Church to use it as its legal address. The land plot, in the village of Vesoly, is designated as a household farm plot (dlya vedeniya lichnogo podsobnogo khozyastva). This land use permits the construction of a dwelling, but not of a religious building.

Glamozdinova argued that house is occupied as a dwelling by an acquaintance who also tends the crops on the plot, and the congregation uses the room for only four hours per week. The fine was upheld on appeal at both Bagayevskaya District Court on 16 October 2017 and Rostov Regional Court on 21 November 2017.

In September 2018, Glamozdinova's Seventh-day Adventist Church voluntarily liquidated itself, as only a few elderly women remained; the younger people have all left as it is hard to live in the village. The remaining Adventists sometimes pray together in various houses.

Glamozdinova's lawyers, Vladimir Ryakhovsky and Sergei Chuginov of the Moscow-based Slavic Centre for Law and Justice, argued before the Constitutional Court that the Land Code and Administrative Code Article 8.8 Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use") violated the Constitution's Articles:

- 28 ("Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with other any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them");
- 35 Part 2 ("Everyone shall have the right to have property, possess, use and dispose of it both personally and jointly with other people");
- 55 Part 3 ("The rights and freedoms of man and citizen may be limited by the federal law only to such an extent to which it is necessary for the protection of the fundamental principles of the constitutional system, morality, health, the rights and lawful interests of other people, for ensuring defence of the country and security of the state").

The panel of 15 judges, chaired by Judge Valery Zorkin, ruled that the Land Code and Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 do not violate the Constitution. They clarified, however, that these laws do not imply that the owner of a house and land plot designated as a household farm plot should be prosecuted for allowing their use for meetings for worship or as a religious organisation's legal address: "A different understanding of these statutes would entail a violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in the Constitution's Article 28, including the right to profess any religion individually or together with others, and would lead, contrary to the Constitution's Article 55, Part 3, to unjustified restriction of property rights guaranteed by the Constitution's Article 35."

The Court reiterated that, as the Religion Law states, "worship services, religious rites, and ceremonies may be performed unhindered" in dwellings, and noted that this is "consistent with the purpose of residential premises, which are called upon to satisfy not only the material requirements of citizens, but also their spiritual interests as an integral element of personal development and fulfilment, including the spiritual needs of believers, realised on the basis of freedom of religion".

The Court also pointed out that registration of a religious organisation at a residential address is permissible, as it "does not necessarily mean the transformation of a dwelling

into the administrative (official) premises of a religious organisation, and therefore does not inevitably lead to the improper use of the land under it".

The Court noted, however, that religious use of residential premises must take into account the rights and legitimate interests of residents and neighbours, and the requirements of health and safety and environmental protection legislation. The Court also stated that it would be "unacceptable" for a dwelling to lose the features of residential premises and acquire those of a religious or administrative building.

Consequences of November 2019 Constitutional Court ruling

In the short term, the November 2019 ruling can now be used to review Glamozdinova's and other cases in which the Land Code and Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use") were not applied in line with the constitutional and legal meanings clarified by the Constitutional Court judges.

In the longer term, state officials and law enforcement "must", the Court ruled, "proceed from the totality of factual circumstances that indicate the transformation of a dwelling into a religious or administrative (official) building" – that is, establish whether the premises have completely lost the characteristics of residential premises and have acquired "the signs of a religious or administrative building".

The Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr) is responsible for inspections, and fines both religious organisations and their members under Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use") for conducting or permitting worship on land which been classified as being for residential (or other) and not religious use.

The Constitutional Court ruling may lead to fewer fines being imposed on religious organisations and individuals, but this will depend on Rosreestr and other officials (who sometimes refer cases to Rosreestr) consciously taking a more nuanced approach.

"Some words in the ruling do not have regulatory certainty," Christian lawyer and human rights defender Vasily Nichik observed in a blogpost on 20 November, "which leaves ample room for interpretation by law enforcement".

When the Constitutional Court has previously issued rulings or clarifications of legal issues affecting religious communities (for example, on public event notification in December 2012 and on the definition of "missionary activity" in March 2018), it has been clear from Forum 18's subsequent analyses of court verdicts that police and prosecutor's offices, at least, often fail to apply the Constitutional Court's stipulations. Where the Constitutional Court's rulings have been more consistently helpful to religious communities and believers has been in court, where they may be invoked in defence arguments and cited by judges as grounds for acquittal.

On 28 November 2019, Rosreestr told Forum 18 that "when Rosreestr employees conduct inspections of compliance with land legislation on land plots used by religious organisations, the position of the Constitutional Court .. will be taken into account". It added on 3 December that the ruling "has been sent to all territorial divisions of Rosreestr", and that, during inspections, staff will analyse whether a dwelling has lost the "signs of residential premises", as stipulated by the Constitutional Court.

The ruling applies to all homes (the most common type of building used for meetings for worship), lawyer Sergei Chugunov explained to Forum 18 on 25 November, despite the

Constitutional Court's focus on residential premises standing on "household farm plots". The ruling seems unlikely, however, to affect other types of premises used for meetings for worship, such as commercial buildings given or rented to religious associations.

In his evaluation of the Constitutional Court ruling, lawyer Vasily Nichik noted: "It is necessary to petition the state to lift the ban on transferring premises from residential to non-residential status for the activities of a religious association," as well as to simplify the process of changing the permitted use of a plot to "religious", and allocate land with the purpose of "religious use" in accessible locations.

March 2018 Constitutional Court ruling

In March 2018 the Constitutional Court defined "missionary activity" more closely, but this has had only a limited impact on the cases brought by prosecutors.

As Mikhail Shakhov, Deputy Head of the Duma Committee on the Development of Civil Society, Public and Religious Associations' Expert Group on improving legislation in the field of freedom of conscience and religious associations, told "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" on 20 November 2019, inconsistency and opportunities for arbitrary official actions remain.

"Our law says quite clearly that missionary activity is the activity of a religious association aimed at turning a person who is not a member or participant of the organisation into a member or participant," Shakhov noted, yet "the law does not explain anywhere who members or participants are, or how one differs from the other".

Main message of 2019 Constitutional Court ruling "is positive"

"The fact that the court indicated that the premises, as well as the land, can be used to satisfy spiritual needs, is important, because so many religious organisations today do not have their own religious buildings and structures for worship," Slavic Centre lawyer Vladimir Ryakhovsky told "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" on 20 November 2019. "They are forced to use for this purpose residential premises belonging to their parishioners .. I think that the Constitutional Court has put an end to this dispute."

"The main message of the [Constitutional Court] ruling is positive", lawyer Vasily Nichik agreed in his blogpost of 20 November. He nevertheless expressed concerns over the "absolute ignorance" of the law shown by the Presidential Administration's Constitutional Court representative Mikhail Krotov at the Court's hearing on 8 October. He said that the right to worship in a residential building as enshrined in Religion Law Article 16 applies only to family members, implying that religious organisations do not have this right.

"Even a schoolchild can see that Article 16 is in Section III, which lists the rights given to a religious organisation," Nichik remarked. "If our legislators say such things, it is not surprising that sometimes laws are adopted that contradict each other, creating a conflict of law, because only without knowing the laws can one say such a thing."

Numbers of fines rising

The number of such fines relating to places of worship – 21 known fines in January to October 2019 – is relatively low, but has increased since the introduction of the so-called Yarovaya "anti-terrorism" legislation in July 2016.

Among other things, these amendments imposed serious restrictions on unclearly defined "missionary activity", banned changing the status of premises from residential to non-residential for religious purposes, and required religious communities to display their full legal name on premises they use.

The number of fines for meeting for worship on land not designated for religious use (such as in homes) increased sharply after the July 2016 changes. One lawyer compared the legal situation to fining a driver whose passengers drink tea because a road is not designated for drinking tea.

The post-July 2016 rise in cases under Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use") "appeared rather unexpectedly", the Slavic Centre for Law and Justice noted on 15 November 2019, with no change in land legislation.

"We think that this was a conscious strategy, invented by someone, in order to suppress the activities of religious minorities, especially Protestants, who have been the most affected by this problem," the Slavic Centre for Law and Justice commented. "Moreover, this practice has spread not only to residential premises, but also to other buildings and premises in which religious organisations conduct their services, in particular administrative ones."

Christian lawyer Vasily Nichik called this "a new practice of interpretation of the Land Code". He noted in his 20 November blogpost that Article 16 of the Religion Law provides "a guaranteed right to the unhindered conduct of worship services, rites, and ceremonies on residential premises".

Rosreestr fines both religious organisations and their members under Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use") for conducting or permitting worship on land which been classified as being for residential (or other) and not religious use.

Why the need to use homes for worship meetings?

Even if religious communities have for many years used a building as a place of worship, complex, sometimes contradictory, and often inconsistently applied laws can create problems for them.

In July 2019, officials barred a Baptist community in Novorossiysk from using its church "for religious purposes", despite the fact that it has worshipped on the same site for two decades.

Disputes over religious property – whether over acquisition, retention, or restitution – remain unresolved in many parts of Russia. Problems caused by the authorities for communities attempting to build new places of worship can range from repeated refusals to legalise claims to land, to the withdrawal of building permission while construction is underway. The communities affected have included a Buddhist monastery, a mosque, and a Hare Krishna temple.

Problems may arise at any point in the process of establishing a place of worship – the allocation of a site by the authorities, the securing of planning permission, the construction itself – and even afterwards. Officials have repeatedly rebuffed attempts to legalise ownership of the land where Good News Pentecostal Church in Samara has worshipped for two decades, and want to demolish the church at the congregation's expense. In May 2019, officials bulldozed a mosque built on farmland near Chernyakhovsk in Russia's western exclave of Kaliningrad because it violated planning regulations.

Both owners and tenants who start to use a building without ensuring that all necessary official approvals have been secured may face prosecution under Administrative Code Article 9.5, Part 5 ("Bringing an object of capital construction into commission without permission").

An amendment to the Administrative Code in August 2019 increased penalties for this to 20,000 to 50,000 Roubles for officials, and 500,000 to 1 million Roubles for legal entities. A fine of 50,000 Roubles is equivalent to just over one month's average wages for those in work.

The Pentecostal Union's legal department warned its member congregations on 22 July and 5 August 2019 to check all documents carefully even when only renting premises, and if doing the building themselves, to make sure they have received all official permits "from the start of construction to its completion", in order to avoid "the high probability of significant material punishment".

If the authorities decide that appropriate permissions for construction have not been obtained, then they may lodge a civil suit to have a place of worship demolished as an "unauthorised structure".

Many registered religious communities with legal status cannot acquire their own places of worship, which forces them to use residential or commercial property for their meetings.

"Today, religious associations have dozens, if not hundreds, of prayer houses and religious buildings located in private houses and residential complexes and on dacha plots," Igor Yanshin and Yevgeny Shestakov wrote on the Svoboda Verit (Freedom to Believe) website on 1 February 2018.

Unregistered groups which do not want or have legal status are designated as "religious groups" under the Religion Law. They must notify the authorities of their existence and provide the names and addresses of all their members, as well as addresses where any meetings take place. Without legal status they cannot buy or rent property on their own behalf, or have it legally transferred to them, and therefore rely on private individuals allowing them to use space for meetings for worship - normally residential or commercial premises.

Informing the authorities draws state officials' attention to private houses used for meetings for worship and may lead to fines. This happened in December 2017 to Aleksandr Yakimov, who hosted meetings for worship of his New Generation Protestant church in a room of his house. Prosecutors used his submission of the religious group's details to the Justice Ministry to establish his status as pastor and his house as the address where meetings for worship were regularly held.

Not informing the authorities, however, leaves group leaders open to prosecution under Administrative Code Article 19.7 ("Failure to provide or late provision of information to a state body").

"When it comes to the question of giving religious organisations the chance to have places of worship in locations which would be convenient for people and consistent with the requirements of the law, the state wants no part of it," Christian lawyer and human rights defender Vasily Nichik told Forum 18 on 11 December 2019. "It has always been so and it is still so today."

Some cases from 2018-19

As noted above, Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 is only one part of the problem. After a prosecutor's office inspection of the Protestant organisation Youth With A Mission in Rostov-on-Don, the organisation was referred to Rosreestr. Rosreestr fined Youth With A Mission 432,397 Roubles and its president Olga Gorina 324,298 Roubles under Administrative Code Article 7.1 ("Unauthorised occupation of a land plot"). They challenged the fines unsuccessfully at Railway District Court on 6 March 2018 and Rostov Regional Court on 30 May 2018. Gorina also unsuccessfully appealed at the supervisory level on 29 October 2018.

Rosreestr imposed the fines as the legal ownership of the land plot had not been entered in the Unified State Registry of Property, and Youth With A Mission did not have land title documents. Gorina argued that she had done everything possible to draw up the correct documents, but registration of the organisation's right to the land had been refused.

According to the court verdicts, the plot and the buildings on it had passed by means of a series of incomplete leases since the late 1990s through a series of owners, the last of whom formally gave the plot to Youth With A Mission, without properly registering their land rights.

On 29 March 2018, Youth With A Mission was fined 354,620 Roubles and Gorina was fined 236,413 Roubles under Article 8.8 Part 1 after Rosreestr accused them of using a house on land designated for "individual residential construction" for "prayer and religious gatherings", three times a week. The defence argued that worship is permitted on residential premises under Religion Law Article 16, Part 2, but Judge Vladislav Sedykh of Railway District Court decided that Youth With A Mission had contravened the Land Code.

Judges disagree over whether the provisions of the Religion Law free a defendant from responsibility under Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use"). Lawyers hope the Constitutional Court's November 2019 ruling will help resolve this.

On 14 August 2019, for example, Kulunda District Court in Altai Region found that Andrey Vins, the owner of a land plot designated for "personal subsistence cultivation", should not have been fined 10,000 Roubles on 16 July for allowing meetings for worship in his house of the unregistered Council of Churches Baptists. On 12 August, the same Judge, Oksana Klimenko, also acquitted the community's leader, Yury Pivnev, who had received an identical fine on 10 July. The defendants argued that the house was lived in, the land was used to grow fruit trees, and the services were for family and friends. The judge noted that premises for religious groups are provided by participants, that property law proceeds from the principle that owners can do anything which does not violate the rights of others, and that Religion Law Article 16 permits religious worship on residential premises.

On 10 April 2019, Izobilny District Court in the Stavropol Region, however, upheld the 10,000 Rouble fine imposed on Andrei Shelamov, the owner of a plot designated for "individual residential construction", on which he had allowed a Baptist Union religious group to hold meetings for worship in his house. Shelamov pointed out that services only take place at certain times in one room, that his family lives in the house, and that he was providing worship space as a member of the religious group. The judge decided, however, that these arguments were "untenable, based on a misinterpretation of the norms of the law".

Number of cases not fully known

The numbers of cases involving religious communities and believers under Administrative Code Article 8.8, Part 1 ("The use of a land plot not for its intended purpose in accordance with its belonging to a particular land category and/or authorised use") is not publicly known. As Rosreestr imposes fines directly, there is no public record unless people choose to challenge them in court. In some instances, they may appeal to Rosreestr itself and have a punishment overturned without ever entering the court system.

Christian lawyer and human rights defender Vasily Nichik described to Forum 18 how he and his colleagues meet Rosreestr inspectors and "present all the same arguments as in the courts" in an attempt to resolve cases. "Unfortunately, some [inspectors] work with common sense, others do not".

There were 59 such fines imposed on religious associations or their members between the beginning of 2017 and the middle of 2019, of which 39 were challenged, Rosreestr told Forum 18 on 3 December 2019. Of these 39 appeals (both to the courts and to Rosreestr itself), 9 were successful and 30 were unsuccessful.

Rosreestr refused to give details of the religious communities or courts involved, and did not respond to Forum 18's request to break the figures down further by year.

Between 2012 and 2015 there were four cases, in 2016 seven cases, in 2017 there were 23 cases, and in 2018 there were 10 cases. From January to October 2019 there have been 21 cases.

All but one of the 2018-19 fines are known to have been appealed against in court.

Of these 31 cases, 10 (from six investigations) occurred in Rostov Region, four (from three investigations) in Altai Region, five in Sverdlovsk Region, two each in Tula (one investigation) and Astrakhan Regions, and one each in Moscow, Irkutsk, Primorye, Samara, Ulyanovsk, Stavropol and Tyumen Regions and the Republic of Khakasiya.

Forum 18 also observed a considerably higher incidence of Article 8.8, Part 1 cases in Rostov Region in 2017.

Religious affiliations were: unregistered Baptist – 9; Baptist Union – 6; Methodist – 1, other Protestant including Pentecostal – 11; Muslim – 2; New Apostolic Church – 1; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – 1.

Nine of these cases involved registered religious organisations, while another three involved official representatives of religious organisations (subject to higher fines than ordinary citizens). The majority of fines punished private individuals, including some leaders of unregistered religious groups.

Five initial appeals were successful, although one fine was reinstated after being sent back by a higher court for re-examination. Another community had its fine reduced by half. The results of two initial appeals are not yet known. One district court returned the case against an individual to Rosreestr for reconsideration – it is unknown whether Rosreestr persisted in imposing the fine. One case was resolved out of court.

The fines imposed can be a considerable burden, especially for individuals on low incomes (such as pensioners), smaller religious associations with no support from a larger association, or for religious groups. In addition to any fine, an appeal incurs legal costs.

Even if a fine is overturned, Rosreestr may challenge the judge's ruling, setting off a chain of re-examinations and further appeals which may take months and still not end in the defendant's favour. This results in increased legal costs for any defendant, with no guarantee that these costs can be reclaimed even if the appeal is successful.

Heavy sentences against real and alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members

Sova Center (16.12.2019) - <https://bit.ly/38N0GkP> - (...) November brought new cases and sentences against real and alleged members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a radical party banned in Russia as terrorist – in our opinion, without sufficient reason. We view charges of terrorism against Hizb ut-Tahrir followers imposed merely on the basis of their party activity as inappropriate, since the party itself was never known to be involved in terrorism.

We learned in November that, in October, the Judicial Chamber on Cases of the Military of the Supreme Court of Russia upheld the sentence issued in June in the case of 50-year-old Novosibirsk resident **Kabul Usenbaev**. At that time, the Far Eastern District Military Court found him guilty of participating in the activities of a terrorist organization (Article 205.5 Part 2 of the Criminal Code) and sentenced him to 13 years in prison in a maximum security penal colony.

In mid-November, the Southern (North Caucasus) District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don delivered the sentence in the Yalta case against Hizb ut-Tahrir members. Muslim **Aliev and Inver Bekirov** were found guilty under Article 205.5 Part 1 of the Criminal Code (organizing the activities of a terrorist organization) and Article 278 of the Criminal Code with the use of Article 30 Part 1 of the Criminal Code and Article 33 Part 3 of the Criminal Code (organizing preparations for a violent seizure of power) and sentenced to 19 and 18 years in prison, respectively. The remaining defendants were found guilty under Article 205.5 Part 2 of the Criminal Code and Article 278 of the Criminal Code with the use of Article 30 Part 1 of the Criminal Code and Article 35 part 2 of the Criminal Code (preparations for a violent seizure of power by a group of persons by prior conspiracy) and sentenced as follows: **Emir-Usein Kuku and Vadim Siruk** to 12 years of incarceration, **Refat Alimov** to 8 years, and **Arsen Dzhapparov** to 7 years. All offenders were sentenced to a one-year restriction of freedom as an additional punishment.

In the second half of the month, the Central District Military Court issued a verdict to imprison **Amir Gilyazov**, a follower of Hizb ut-Tahrir from Chelyabinsk. He was found guilty under Article 205.5 Part 2 of the Criminal Code, under Article 205.2 Part 2 of the Criminal Code (public justification of terrorism on the Internet) and Article 205.1 Part 1.1 of the Criminal Code (recruitment into a terrorist organization) and sentenced to 11 years of incarceration with a ban on activities related to the administration of websites and online channels for a period of three years. However, he was released from serving his sentence in a colony for health reasons. Gilyazov has a disability; he moves in a wheelchair due to Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

In mid-November, **Azat Lukmanov** was detained in Moscow on suspicion of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir. Lukmanov was taken to Ufa, where the court was to choose a preventive measure for him. Previously, Lukmanov had already been convicted twice under Article 282.2 Part 1 of the Criminal Code for his involvement in the party activities.

In the second half of November, the FSB of Russia reported that two Hizb ut-Tahrir "leaders" and seven "participants" were detained in Moscow, Tatarstan and the Tyumen Region. During the searches, "a significant amount" of Hizb ut-Tahrir materials banned in Russia, communications equipment and electronic media were seized. According to OVD-Info Project, **Marat Saibatalov** and **Alim Timkanov** have been charged under Article 205.5 Part 1 of the Criminal Code, **Ruslan Bariev**, **Damir Abdrafikov**, **Rafis Idrisov**, **Aidar Tashbulatov**, **Ruslan Fomin** and Uzbek citizen **Farrukh Makhkamov** – under Article 205.5 Part 2 of the Criminal Code. It was reported that some of the defendants may have been tortured in the course of the searches.

CRIMEA: Court orders parish to destroy its chapel

A Crimean Court ordered the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to destroy its wooden chapel in Yevpatoriya, built before the 2014 Russian occupation. The parish is challenging the 6 November decision. A Judge again fined Imam Aydar Islyamov one week's average wages for leading Friday prayers at a Mosque. Prosecutors lodged "missionary activity" charges after failing to find Land Code violations.

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (09.12.2019) <http://bit.ly/2sihQGa> - The Orthodox Church of Ukraine fears that the authorities in the western Crimean city of Yevpatoriya will demolish a small wooden chapel it built between two blocks of flats in 2013, before Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea. The city court ruled on 6 November 2019 that the Church is using the site illegally and that it should demolish its chapel within one month.

The Church complains it learnt about the court hearing only on that day. Its lawyer said the Church is appealing against the decision (see below).

Ukrainian journalist Oleksandra Yefymenko visited the Yevpatoriya church during Sunday liturgy on 1 December, which was attended by "a large number of parishioners" squeezing into the small church. Many had come specially from other cities of Crimea, she told Forum 18 (see below).

Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea is not recognised by Ukraine or internationally.

The Russian authorities in Crimea use the wide range of available laws and regulations to punish communities that meet for worship in places the authorities do not like.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has called on the Russian government not to evict the Orthodox Church of Ukraine congregation from its rented accommodation in the Crimean capital Simferopol while the Committee considers an appeal by 62 parishioners. The premises serve as the Crimean Diocese's Sts Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral.

On 18 November a Russian arbitration court rejected the Diocese's latest appeal against a court order to annul the rental agreement and evict the Cathedral. On 28 November, the Diocese lodged a last-ditch appeal to Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow.

On 8 November, a Magistrate's Court in Simferopol District fined Imam Aydar Islyamov one week's average local wages for leading Friday prayers at a Mosque in a home in the

village of Ukrainka (Kurtsy in Crimean Tatar) near Simferopol on 11 October which was raided by armed Russian security personnel. He was punished under Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 ("Russians conducting missionary activity"). A municipal official told Forum 18 that an inspection had found that Islyamov had not violated the Land Code. The Prosecutor's Office official who led the case in court refused to explain why an individual should be punished for leading worship (see below).

The Prosecutor's Office, OMON riot police and officers of the Police's Anti-Extremism Centre raided Friday prayers on 5 July and again on 25 October at a mosque in the village of Zarechnoe, also in Simferopol District. After the first raid, Prosecutors similarly brought a case against Imam Arsen Kantemirov under Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4. However, on 7 October the Magistrate cancelled the case because it had been lodged outside the deadline for such administrative cases.

Neither of these two Simferopol District Mosques have Russian state registration. The Crimean Justice Ministry has rejected the registration application from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine's Simferopol parish, most recently on 20 September. It claimed there were "violations" in the documents presented. A Justice Ministry official insisted to Forum 18 that "nothing in principle" obstructs the registration of communities of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (see below).

Another community which has been repeatedly denied Russian state registration is the Tavrida Muftiate, a body independent of the state-backed Crimean Muftiate. The Justice Ministry has registered ten of its mosque communities independently, but refuses to register the Tavrida Muftiate as a centralised religious organisation (see below).

Court orders chapel destruction

The Kiev Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church built a small, wooden chapel between two blocks of flats in the western Crimean city of Yevpatoriya in 2013. This was before the 2014 Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea. The now Kiev-based lawyer for the Church, Sergei Zayets of the Regional Centre for Human Rights, told Forum 18 that the chapel was built on land belonging to the community of those living in the flats.

According to court documents seen by Forum 18, the wooden chapel is 5.5 metres (18 feet) by 5.5 metres and its height to the top of the gold-painted cross on the wooden onion dome is just over 10 metres (35 feet).

After the Russian annexation, the Russian-backed Yevpatoria city administration began moves to have the chapel demolished. Officials began with written warnings.

On 17 September 2019, the municipal authorities, including its Municipal Control Department, brought a suit to Yevpatoria City Court, seeking the demolition of the chapel. It claimed that the Diocese had never gained approval for the chapel's construction.

Judge Galina Lobanova at the City Court ruled on 6 November that the Church is using the site illegally and that the Church must demolish its chapel within one month of the decision coming into force, according to the decision seen by Forum 18.

The Church complains it learnt about the court hearing only on that day. Its lawyer, Zayets, told Forum 18 that, as the hearing took place in the absence of representatives of the parish, it has lodged a request to the same Yevpatoria City Court for a re-examination of the decision taken in absentia. "This method has in the past proved more effective than an appeal to Crimea's Supreme Court," Zayets told Forum 18.

Following the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and its recognition by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in January 2019, the Crimean Diocese of the Kiev Patriarchate became part of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Members of the Yevpatoriya parish then stuck a notice on the window of the chapel door: "Our Church is canonical".

Ukrainian journalist Oleksandra Yefymenko visited the Yevpatoriya church during Sunday liturgy on 1 December, which was attended by "a large number of parishioners" squeezing into the small church. Many had come specially from other cities of Crimea, she told Forum 18 on 3 December.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine lawyer, Sergei Zayets, told Forum 18 that it later added information about the threatened destruction of the Yevpatoriya chapel to its 28 August appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Committee about the threatened eviction of its cathedral from the rented premises in Simferopol.

Kirill Vavrenyuk, first deputy head of Yevpatoriya Municipality, insisted that the chapel is not a place of worship. "Some people, provocateurs, call it a church, but the court decided it was not," he told Forum 18 from Yevpatoriya on 2 December. He insisted that it had been a court decision, not his own, that the chapel must be destroyed. "They had no documents to build a church there."

Asked if the Municipality was seeking the destruction of any other buildings because they do not have full documentation, Vavrenyuk told Forum 18 he did not know.

Asked if the chapel would be ordered destroyed if it belonged not to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine but to the Moscow Patriarchate, Vavrenyuk chose not to answer. He told Forum 18 that he was unaware of the Church's appeal to the UN Human Rights Committee.

Punished again for leading Friday prayers

On 11 October, Imam Aydar Islyamov led Friday prayers as he has done since 2016 in a Mosque in a home in the majority Crimean Tatar village of Ukrainka (Kurtsy in Crimean Tatar) in Perovo Settlement in Simferopol District, on the south-western edge of Crimea's capital Simferopol. Armed Russian security personnel - some of them masked - arrived in armoured cars, telling those at Friday prayers that they were there to "check the electricity meters and the mosque's documents", the Crimean Solidarity monitoring group noted the same day. Officials questioned witnesses as they prepared a possible prosecution.

On 15 October, at the request of the Prosecutor's Office, the chief specialist of Simferopol District Municipal Control Department examined the land plot for the building (which the court decision describes as a mosque) where Friday prayers are held. The land is owned by Perovo Village Administration.

"We control land use, and we found no violations of the Land Code," Sergei Sayenko, head of the Municipal Control Department, told Forum 18 on 9 December. He pointed out that the land is allocated in the urban development plan as a place of worship. "So Islyamov has the right to apply for it to be recognised as such."

The authorities then accused Imam Islyamov of violating Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 ("Russians conducting missionary activity") for leading Friday prayers on 11 October. On 24 October the case was handed to Simferopol District's Magistrate's Court No. 76, according to court records.

On 8 November, Judge Tatyana Syanova found Imam Islyamov guilty and fined him 5,000 Russian Roubles, about one week's average local wages, according to the decision seen by Forum 18. An official at the Magistrate's Court refused to discuss Islyamov's case, but told Forum 18 that he had not appealed against the punishment.

Imam Islyamov denied any wrongdoing in court. He added that he would register his use of the land.

The Prosecutor's Office official who led the case in court, Aleksandr Bogdan, supported punishment for Imam Islyamov.

Bogdan refused to explain why an individual should be punished for leading worship. "I give no comments on my activity," he told Forum 18 on 3 December. Asked if he had been present at the Mosque on 11 October he put the phone down.

The authorities accused Imam Islyamov on the same charges of conducting "missionary activity" for leading Friday prayers on 11 May 2018. The same Judge Syanova fined him 5,000 Russian Roubles on 20 June 2018.

Imam Islyamov's 2018 prosecution under Russian Administrative Code Article 5.26 was one of 23 prosecutions brought against individuals for ill-defined "missionary activity", of which 19 ended with punishment. Many of those punished were prosecuted for sharing their faith on the street or for holding worship at unapproved venues.

The Mosque community had lodged a registration application, but Crimea's Justice Ministry had "left it without consideration", according to the court decision.

Yelena Shadrina of Crimea's Justice Ministry would not discuss the Mosque's registration application and why it had been rejected. But she confirmed to Forum 18 that no religious communities in Perovo have Russian state registration.

Registration denials "all done on basis of law"

In addition to Imam Islyamov's Mosque in Simferopol District, some other religious communities in Crimea have tried in vain to gain registration with the Russian Justice Ministry.

The Simferopol community of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine finally decided it would seek Russian state registration after insisting for many years that it would not do so after the Russian annexation of the peninsula. It reluctantly lodged an application for the Simferopol parish without any mention of any subordination to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in mid-March 2019.

"The question now arises," Archbishop Kliment told Radio Free Europe's Krym Realii on 23 March, "either we register in accordance with the demands of the Crimean authorities, or we lose the diocese and everything that we had before 2014. I can't take such a risk."

Archbishop Kliment submitted to Crimea's Justice Ministry the same statute another community had used to register a congregation in 2014, soon after the Russian annexation of Crimea. The only difference was that in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine's case, no affiliation with a hierarchical body was given.

The Crimean Justice Ministry issued its first refusal, signed by the then deputy head Irina Demetskaya, on 12 April. The second refusal, dated 1 August, was signed by the then head Valery Pesenko. Demetskaya again signed the third refusal on 20 September.

Another community which has been repeatedly denied Russian state registration is the Tavrida Muftiate, a body independent of the state-backed Crimean Muftiate. The Justice Ministry has registered ten of its mosque communities independently, but refuses to register the Tavrida Muftiate as a centralised religious organisation.

"The bishop applied for registration because there was no other way to preserve the religious community," its lawyer Sergei Zayets of the Regional Centre for Human Rights told Forum 18 from Kiev.

"We want to have registration as a centralised religious organisation to be able to present ourselves publicly," a Muftiate official told Forum 18 from Crimea on 2 December. "We want to be able to hold conferences and undertake projects. We have repeatedly applied, but each time they turn us down, most recently in November 2019."

The Muftiate official also noted that the Justice Ministry will no longer register any of its mosques. "There's an unwritten regulation," the official claimed. The official added that their Mosques have not faced raids or fines.

Yelena Shadrina of the Registration Department for Non- Commercial Organisations at Crimea's Justice Ministry in Simferopol would not discuss in detail the registration rejection of the Simferopol parish of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. "The documents were not in accordance with the law," she claimed to Forum 18 on 2 December. "We conducted a legal expert analysis and our rejection letter included references to the law explaining the violations. They could correct them."

Asked if there is any reason why her Ministry would not register communities of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Shadrina responded: "There is no reason in principle why they cannot be registered." She insisted that any registration decisions would be unrelated to the issue of the Church's property.

Shadrina similarly refused to discuss in detail the registration rejections of the Tavrida Muftiate. "They committed violations in their documents and the reasons for the rejection are given in the letters," she insisted to Forum 18.

Shadrina refused to discuss the specifics of registration denials, noting that she handles thousands of non-commercial organisations and cannot remember all of them. "All is done on the basis of the law," she insisted to Forum 18.

Several other communities function without Russian state registration. Among these are communities of the Council of Churches Baptists, who choose not to seek state registration on principle.

Also unregistered are communities of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad under Metropolitan Agafangel (Pashkovsky). "Our parishes function as in the Soviet Union," he told Forum 18 from the Ukrainian city of Odessa on 3 December. "If you don't function loudly, they don't touch you."

Banned as "extremist"

Among religious communities banned as "extremist" under Russian rule in Crimea are Jehovah's Witnesses and the Muslim missionary movement Tabligh Jamaat. Any activity by any of their adherents risks criminal prosecution.

After more than 15 months in pre-trial detention following his October 2017 arrest by the Russian FSB security service, the Crimean Supreme Court jailed local Muslim Renat Suleimanov for four years. He was punished on "extremism"-related charges for alleged

Tabligh Jamaat membership. He is serving his sentence in a labour camp in Russia, where he has spent months in a prison punishment cell. Three others on trial with him were given two and a half year suspended sentences, when they will live under restrictions.

The first criminal trial of a Jehovah's Witness in Crimea since Russia annexed the peninsula in 2014 began in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi with a closed preliminary hearing on 6 September. Sergei Filatov is facing "extremism" charges, which he denies. Repeated hearings have been postponed because witnesses failed to appear. The next hearing at Dzhankoi City Court is due on 10 December, according to court records.

Filatov 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 in May 2017 following Russia's nationwide ban on Jehovah's Witnesses. "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."

Also on trial on "extremism"-related charges is another Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses, Artyom Gerasimov from Yalta. His trial began at Yalta City Court with a preliminary hearing on 20 September. Repeated hearings have been postponed because witnesses failed to appear. The next hearing is due on 11 December, according to court records.

An "extremism"-related criminal case was also launched against fellow Yalta Jehovah's Witness Taras Kuzio. He remains a suspect. Viktor Stashevsky from Sevastopol is facing a similar "extremism" prosecution instigated by the Russian FSB security service.

In Moscow, Old Believers begin to assert their heritage

There is a plan to accord greater recognition to Orthodox Christians who maintain the liturgical and ritual practices as they were before the 1652-1666 reforms



La Croix International (05.12.2019) - <http://bit.ly/33To6BE> - Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Orthodox Church of Old Believers in Moscow.

More than three centuries after the historic split in the Russian Orthodox Church, Old Believers want to defend their rights and heritage.

"We exist. Not only in museums and history books," says Mikhail Shakhov, a respected figure in the one of the two Old Believers' churches in Moscow.

"Of course, it's not said loud and clear. But it is reality," Shakhov said.

"From now on, we talk to each other and organize ourselves. As a result, the government listens to us and takes us seriously. The Kremlin, which was talking to Catholics, Muslims and Jews but not to Old Believers, put an end to this discriminatory situation."

Renewal

The year 2020 will mark an important milestone with the 400th anniversary of the birth of Archpriest Avvakum. From his cathedral in Kazan, he led the opposition to the reforms of Patriarch Nikon who, from 1652, reformed the Russian liturgy, the starting point for the 1666 schism.

"Even today, we still consider that it is the Patriarchate and not us who left the real Church. It is he who continues to be deprived of divine grace," insists Shakhov.

But behind the dogmatic firmness, there is a plan for a dialogue to accord greater recognition for Old Believers. As a result, next year, Archpriest Avvakum, whose writings are considered masterpieces of Russian literature, will be openly celebrated in Russia. The jubilee is supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin. He signed the decree for the commemorations, both in Moscow and in the regions. Officially, the authorities will celebrate the writer Avvakum.

"But the message is clear. The state shows respect for all Old Believers," says Shakhov. "Our goal is to operate as a union."

It is in this favourable context that the World Union of Old Believers has just been set up in Moscow.

"Our objective is to function as a trade union to legally and culturally help and protect Old Believers," explains its founder Leonid Sevastyanov, himself from a family of Old Believers in Rostov-on-Don.

This 40-year-old, after studying at the Moscow Theological Seminary and the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, went to the Department of International Relations at Georgetown University in Washington.

An admirer of the Western world and advocate of the technological revolution while at the same time displaying a certain conservatism, he worked for a long time within the Patriarchate in Moscow.

Sevastyanov defends his eclecticism to promote a form of modernity.

Towards new churches

"I believe in what my ancestors believed in. The Old Believers were guarded by God, otherwise they would not have survived the genocide. But, above all, the Old Believers created modern Russia," Sevastyanov said.

To set up his union, he relied on the discreet support of several Old Believers at the highest level. Even if no one close to the Kremlin has publicly declared himself, several personalities like Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin would be proud of their roots as Old Believers.

Not surprisingly, Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church was careful not to comment on the creation of the union or the launch of the Avvakum Jubilee.

All these initiatives weaken its very vertical hold on the Church, and even undermine its personal authority and privileged links with power.

"We are like an alternative movement," jokes Sevastyanov, ensuring that the Kremlin welcomes this religious pluralism.

"The patriarch is probably not very happy," said Shakhov also smiling.

More than three centuries after the split, Old Believers proudly display this renewed confidence.

CRIMEA: UN call to halt Cathedral eviction

The United Nations Human Rights Committee is considering an appeal by 62 parishioners of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine's Sts Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral in the Crimean capital Simferopol. Russian courts ordered the eviction of the community from the building it has rented since 1995. The UN Committee warned Russia not to evict the community while it considers the appeal.

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (04.12.2019) - <http://bit.ly/36o7iEo> - The United Nations Human Rights Committee has called on the Russian government not to evict the Orthodox Church of Ukraine congregation from its rented accommodation in the Crimean capital Simferopol while it considers an appeal by 62 parishioners. The premises have served since 1995 as the Crimean Diocese's Sts Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral. A court decision to evict the community has now gone into force, though the Diocese is now challenging it in Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow.

"The additional information received from the authors suggests that the State party authorities are still proceeding to the eviction of the authors despite the Committee's request," the UN Human Rights Committee wrote on 20 September in a letter seen by Forum 18.

The Human Rights Committee bluntly repeated its request to the Russian authorities not to evict the community from its Simferopol cathedral while it considered the appeal. "The Committee reminds the State party, that a failure to implement the interim measures is incompatible with the obligation to respect in good faith the procedure of individual communications established under the Optional Protocol [to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights]" (see below).

The community's lawyer Sergei Zayets insisted to Forum 18 that Russia should heed the UN request and not evict the community, despite an 18 November Russian arbitration court ruling against it.

Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea is not recognised by Ukraine or internationally.

Ukrainian journalist Oleksandra Yefymenko said Sts Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral is still functioning and services are continuing. "But unfortunately this won't last long," she told Forum 18 from Crimea on 3 December. "The Crimean Diocese has lost in all the courts and they will be evicted from the building. This is my prediction."

Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, the new authorities sharply increased the rent the community had to pay for the building in central Simferopol. In court proceedings, the authorities claimed the community owed tiny amounts of unpaid Ukrainian rent and also that – as an unregistered religious organisation under Russian law – the Diocese was not allowed to rent state-owned or municipally-owned property (see below).

The Russian authorities amended the law on renting state property in Crimea in July 2018 to require that any rental contract for state-owned or municipally-owned property with an organisation that had state registration under Ukrainian law but which failed to gain registration under Russian law after the 2014 annexation be cancelled through the courts (see below).

In his explanation presented to the Crimean State Council justifying the amendment, the head of Crimea's Russian-backed government Sergei Aksyonov noted several Ukrainian-owned companies in such a position, but made no mention of the Orthodox congregation in Simferopol.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine also fears that the authorities in the western Crimean city of Yevpatoriya will demolish a small wooden chapel it built between two blocks of flats in 2013. The city court ruled on 6 November 2019 that the Church is using the site illegally and that the chapel should be demolished. The Church complains it learnt about the court hearing only on that day. Its lawyer said it is challenging the court decision.

Ukrainian journalist Yefymenko attended Sunday liturgy at the Yevpatoriya church on 1 December. "Representatives of the Russian special services may come to such liturgies under the guise of parishioners, and record those who visit places of worship of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine," she told Forum 18.

Obstructing, punishing worship

The Russian authorities in Crimea use the wide range of available laws and regulations to punish communities that meet for worship in places or in ways the authorities do not like.

On 8 November, a Magistrate's Court in Simferopol District fined Imam Aydar Islyamov one week's average local wages for leading Friday prayers in a home in the village of Ukrainka on 11 October.

The Crimean Justice Ministry has rejected the registration application from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine's Simferopol parish, most recently on 20 September. It claimed there were "violations" in the documents presented. A Justice Ministry official insisted to Forum 18 from Simferopol that "nothing in principle" obstructs the registration of communities of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Another community which has been repeatedly denied Russian state registration is the Tavrida Muftiate, a body independent of the state-backed Crimean Muftiate. The Justice Ministry has registered ten of its mosque communities independently, but refuses to register the Tavrida Muftiate as a centralised religious organisation.

Massively increased rent

The Kiev Patriarchate Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as it then was, has rented premises that earlier housed the Officers' Club in central Simferopol since 1995. It is there that its Simferopol and Crimea Diocesan Sts Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral and offices are located. The Diocese has three floors of the building, with the sanctuary on the middle floor.

Almost all the Kiev Patriarchate's dioceses and parishes – including in Crimea – joined the Orthodox Church of Ukraine when it was recognised as canonical by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in January 2019.

In 1996 ultimate ownership of the Simferopol building was transferred from a disbanded military base to the Crimean Property Fund. In 1997, under a Crimean Supreme Council decree, rent was set at the symbolic level of 1 Ukrainian Hryvnia (0.5 Norwegian Kroner, 0.05 Euros or 0.08 US Dollars) a month.

Five of the Kiev Patriarchate's churches in Crimea were forced to close within months of the March 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea.

The Sts Volodymyr and Olga Cathedral – which is next to the offices of the Property Fund – appears on a list of state-owned property in an attachment to a 15 March 2000 Crimean Supreme Council decree. A 16 May 2001 Supreme Council decree – seen by Forum 18 – governs the Church's use of the building, whose size it gives as 1,475.7 square metres (15,900 square feet).

However, on 18 April 2014, the State Council (which replaced the Supreme Council) adopted a new decree – which remains on the Russian-backed Crimean government website – amending the 2001 decree. It confirmed the Diocese's rental of the premises until 2050 but changed the basis on which rent is levied.

Archbishop Kliment (Kushch), head of the Diocese, told Forum 18 in June 2014 that the change would result in the Diocese having to pay about 160 Russian Roubles per square metre per month (236,112 Roubles, then equivalent to 42,990 Norwegian Kroner, 5,145 Euros, or 7,000 US Dollars a month). "We're a non-commercial organisation – how can we pay commercial rates? We live on donations."

No Russian registration, no rental

The Russian-controlled Crimean State Council amended the Crimean Law on the Particulars of Regulating Property and Land Issues in Crimea on 31 July 2018. This required that any rental contract for state-owned or municipally-owned property with an organisation that had state registration under Ukrainian law but which failed to gain registration under Russian law after the 2014 annexation be cancelled through the courts.

In his explanation presented to the Crimean State Council justifying the amendment, the head of Crimea's Russian-backed government Sergei Aksyonov noted several Ukrainian-owned companies in such a position, but made no mention of the Orthodox congregation in Simferopol.

Courts order eviction

On 31 January 2019, the Crimean Property and Land Issues Ministry asked the Federal Tax Service and Justice Ministry in Crimea if the Diocese of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine had brought its documents into line with Russian law (i.e. if it had Russian registration). Finding that it had not, the Ministry wrote to the Diocese on 5 February cancelling the rental agreement and asking when Ministry inspectors could visit the premises to arrange the "return" of the building.

On 14 February the Ministry wrote to the Diocese demanding it pay what it said was unpaid rent and interest of 8.19 Ukrainian Hryvnia (then 2.6 Norwegian Kroner, 0.27 Euros or 0.30 US Dollars). The Ministry received no reply. However, on 26 February, the Diocese paid 40 Russian Roubles (16.50 Ukrainian Hryvnia, 5.25 Norwegian Kroner, 0.55 Euros or 0.60 US Dollars) to meet the rent and interest demanded by the Ministry.

On 20 March, the Ministry brought to Crimea's Arbitration Court a suit against the Diocese to oust it from the Simferopol premises it was renting. Judge Vadim Shkuro, who heard the case, issued an initial decision mostly in favour of the Ministry on 28 June 2019 and a full decision (seen by Forum 18) on 5 July.

The Ministry argued in court that the Diocese owed unpaid rent and interest on the rent for the period November 2016 to February 2019 of 8.19 Ukrainian Hryvnia. It called for the November 2002 rental agreement to be cancelled and for the Diocese to hand back the building to the Ministry.

The Ministry stressed in court that the "motivation" for the suit was the Diocese's failure to bring its documents into accord with Russian law, including the amended Crimean Law on the Particulars of Regulating Property and Land Issues in Crimea (see above).

The Diocese rejected the accusations, insisting that the Ukrainian Crimean Property Fund (which the Russian authorities liquidated in July 2014) was a party to the agreement, not the Russian-controlled Crimean Property and Land Issues Ministry. It also pointed to an April 2014 Crimean State Council awarding the rental of the property to the Diocese until 2050.

The Court ruled that the Ministry was a party to the 2002 rental agreement (even though it did not exist then). It claimed that under Ukrainian law, the Diocese still had to pay the rent in full and on time. However, it noted that the Diocese had made the February 2019 payments to meet this. It also found that the Diocese was using the premises not in accordance with the rental agreement, because as a Ukrainian legal entity but an unregistered Russian entity, the Diocese was since January 2016 restricted in what activity it could perform.

Judge Shkuro ruled to annul the 2002 rental agreement and oblige the Diocese to hand back the premises. He rejected the demand that the Diocese owed unpaid rent. He required the Diocese to pay in procedural fees 12,000 Russian Roubles (4,500 Ukrainian Hryvnia, 1,725 Norwegian Kroner, 170 Euros or 190 US Dollars).

The Diocese appealed against the decision to the 21st Arbitration Appeal Court in Sevastopol. However, in an initial decision on 29 August and a full decision on 5 September, a panel of three Judges chaired by Andrei Tarasenko rejected the appeal, according to the decision seen by Forum 18. The Diocese did not send a representative to the hearing. The court decision came into force on 29 August when the 21st Arbitration Appeal Court handed down its initial decision.

The Diocese appealed further, to the Central Region Arbitration Court, based in the Russian city of Kaluga. However, in an initial decision on 14 November and a full decision on 18 November, a panel of three Judges chaired by Lyudmila Leonova dismissed the appeal, according to the decision seen by Forum 18. Again, the Diocese did not send a representative to the hearing. The Diocese was given two months to make a final appeal to Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow.

The Diocese lodged a Supreme Court appeal on 28 November, Sergei Zayets of the Regional Centre for Human Rights, originally from Crimea but who now works from the Ukrainian capital Kiev, told Forum 18 on 4 December.

"You are looking at this case from the wrong angle"

Yevgeniya Sheltik of the Property and Land Issues Ministry's Legal Department represented it in court both in Sevastopol and Kaluga.

"The Arbitration Court decision came into force on 29 August," Sheltik told Forum 18 from Simferopol on 2 December. "The court bailiffs are the service that enforces court decisions, not the Ministry."

Asked why the Orthodox Church of Ukraine's Cathedral should be evicted from the building it has been renting since 1995 and for which it had agreement to rent until 2050, Sheltik responded: "You are looking at this case from the wrong angle." She did not explain what she meant. She then added: "My competence is to give policy advice to the Ministry. My job was only to appear in court in the case."

Asked why an agreement made with the Ukrainian authorities before the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 was no longer valid, Sheltik got angry, apparently over the reference to the annexation of Crimea. She then put the phone down.

Forum 18 was therefore unable to ask Sheltik if the Russian authorities will abide by the United Nations request that they not take action to evict the community while the Human Rights Committee considers the parishioners' appeal (see below).

UN Human Rights Committee calls to halt eviction

Meanwhile, on 28 August, 62 parishioners lodged an appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Sergei Zayets of the Regional Centre for Human Rights represents the applicants.

On 6 September the Human Rights Committee asked the Russian government as an interim measure "not to evict [the first applicant] and his congregation from the building of their Church in Simferopol, while their case is under consideration by the Committee", according to the Committee's 6 September letter to Zayets seen by Forum 18.

On 6 September the Human Rights Committee also asked the Russian government to provide its response to the appeal within the next six months.

Because of the court case and the Russian authorities' apparent determination to evict the community, the parishioners submitted further information to the Human Rights Committee.

"The additional information received from the authors suggests that the State party authorities are still proceeding to the eviction of the authors despite the Committee's request," the Committee wrote on 20 September in a letter seen by Forum 18.

The Committee bluntly repeated its request to the Russian authorities not to evict the community from its Simferopol cathedral. "The Committee reminds the State party, that a failure to implement the interim measures is incompatible with the obligation to respect in good faith the procedure of individual communications established under the Optional Protocol [to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights]."

The Committee also asked the Russian government not to make public the names of the parishioners who had submitted the appeal.

Gideons scripture distribution leads to 5,000 ruble fine

Defense challenges fine for distributing Bibles on territory of radio engineering university in Riazan

SOVA Center (18.11.2019) - <http://bit.ly/2DbAxh6> - In Riazan, a municipal court fined Oleg Alekseevich K. for "illegal" missionary activity. The defense filed an appeal in the October district court of Riazan.

On 15 November 2019, it became known that on 1 November 2019, in Riazan, a municipal court of judicial district No. 18 fined Oleg Alekseevich K. 5,000 rubles on the basis of part 4 of article 5.26 of the Criminal Code of Administrative Violations of Law (conducting missionary activity in violation of the requirements of legislation on freedom of conscience and freedom of religious confession and on religious associations).

The charging document concerning violation of law was composed on 23 September 2019 by officers of the Riazan police. According to the charging document, "at 12:00 noon, at the entrance to the territory of Riazan State Radio Engineering University [Oleg K.] conducted missionary activity in the name of the 'Gideons' association of Evangelical Christians in violation of the procedure provided for by article 24.2 of the federal law 'On freedom of conscience and religious association,' in particular he presented to a young man the book 'New Testament and Psalter.'"

At the police department, Oleg K. wrote that "I did not draw anybody into a specific religious organization of 'Gideons' Evangelical Christians or into a religious group of 'Gideons,' since such organizations do not exist on the territory of Riazan and Riazan oblast."

In the opinion of Oleg K.'s attorney, "giving to passers-by the book 'New Testament' without informing them about the activity of a specific religious organization, its doctrine, or the conditions and times of attending worship services, or without drawing them into a specific religious organization, is not missionary activity." However, attorney A. Pchelintsev clarified: "even if K. conducted missionary activity, he has a right to do so: he possessed two properly worded authorizations—one for work in prisons and hospitals, and another for conducting missionary activity."

The defense filed an appeal in the October district court of Riazan.

"Such a broad interpretation of the concept of missionary activity that was applied by the municipal judge in the current case," the attorney explains, "permits classifying any action of an individual for dissemination of religious information and literature as illegal missionary activity, which creates a dangerous precedent for infringing the legal rights and liberties of believers and serves as a basis for bring people to administrative accountability without rational basis." (tr, by PDS, posted 18 November 2019)

Source in English:

Russia Religion News <https://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/191118a.html>

High court acknowledges spiritual needs

Constitutional court confirms right of owners to provide their home for conducting worship services

By Mikhail Telekhov

Russia Religion News (14.11.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2DbzGwU> - Worship services, religious rituals, and ceremonies may be freely conducted in a residential building located on a parcel of land designated for private farming, with the permission of the owner, a RAPSI correspondent reports from the courtroom of the Russian Constitutional Court, where the pertinent order was announced.

Such a position, in the opinion of the Constitutional Court, is consistent with the purpose of housing, designed to satisfy not only the physical needs of citizens, but also their spiritual interests,

Adventists of the village of Veselyi

The complainant, a resident of Rostov oblast, Olga Glamozdinova, asked for verification of the consistency with the Russian Constitution of the second paragraph of article 42 of the Land Code of the RF and part 1 of article 88 of the Code of Administrative Violations of Law of the RF, which establish the accountability of owners and nonowners for the use of land for other than the designated purpose.

The materials of the case show that Glamozdinova is a parishioner of the Church of Christian Seventh-Day Adventists in the village of Veselyi, and as the owner of a residential building and parcel of land of a quarter acre in January 2017 she provided to the aforesaid church, by an agreement, free use of the property of her home for conducting worship services, rituals, and ceremonies for 4 hours a week. Glamozdinova's address was entered in the Uniform State Register of Legal Entities as the legal address of the religious organizations.

The complaint reports that in September 2017, the district department of the agency of Rosreestr for Rostov oblast held her administratively accountable and fined her 10 thousand rubles for use of the land for other than its designated purpose. And courts of two instances confirmed the legality of Rosreestr's order.

In the complainant's opinion, the challenged rules are inconsistent with articles 28, 35 (part 2) and 55 (part 3) of the Russian constitution, inasmuch as they violate her right to freely own and dispose of her property and also her right to freedom of conscience and religious confession.

Without alteration of housing

In the opinion of the Constitutional Court, a parcel of land for conducting personal subsidiary farming presupposes, among other things, placement of a residential building in which worship services, religious rituals, and ceremonies may be freely conducted,

which is consistent with the designation of housing designed to satisfy not only physical needs of citizens but also their spiritual interests, including the spiritual needs of believers. At the same time, the rights and legal interests of other persons and the rules for the use of residential premises must be strictly observed by the believers.

"With the consent of the owner of housing, state registration of a religious organization at the address of the residential object of real estate is also possible. This has special significance for numerically small religious organizations that do not have their own buildings and premises and also the possibility of acquiring or renting them. Such a provision does not necessarily mean the transformation of the residential premises into administrative premises of a religious organization, and thus does not lead to the use of the land for other than its designated purposes," the materials of the court say.

The rules being challenged are recognized to be consistent with the Russian constitution. The case of the complainant is subject to review. At the same time, the order indicates that law enforcement must proceed from the totality of factual circumstances in investigating allegations of the transformation of a residential building into a liturgical or administrative building of a religious organization. (tr. by PDS, posted 14 November 2019)

Recommended reading

<https://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/191116a.html>

CRIMEA: Six Tatar Muslims sentenced to 76 years in prison on fabricated charges



12.11.2019 from left Refat Alimov, Arsen Dzhapparov, Vadim Siruk, Emir-Usein Kuku, Muslim Aliev, Inver Bekirov Photo Crimean Solidarity

By Halya Coynash

KHPG (13.11.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2pj1Jr1> - "Does it not strike you as strange that in the 23 years Crimea was under Ukrainian rule, there were no 'extremists' nor 'terrorists', and no 'acts of terrorism', but as soon as Russia arrived with its FSB, there was suddenly all of that?" [The question was asked](#) in his final address to a Russian court by Crimean

Tatar human rights activist Emir-Usein Kuku, one of six Ukrainian political prisoners from occupied Crimea sentenced to horrific terms of imprisonment on 12 November on 'terrorism' charges without any crime.

There was nothing in this case that could remotely warrant criminal charges in a law-based democracy, and all six men - [Muslim Aliev](#); [Inver Bekirov](#); [Refat Alimov](#); [Arsen Dzhapparov](#); [Emir-Usein Kuku](#) and [Vadim Siruk](#) - had long been recognized as political prisoners by [the Memorial Human Rights Centre](#) and as prisoners of conscience by [Amnesty International](#). The charges all hinged on unproven allegations that the men were 'involved' in the peaceful pan-Islamist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir which is legal in Ukraine and most other countries. Russia's Supreme Court ruling declaring it a 'terrorist' organization was handed down in secret and probably as a method of enabling Russia to send Uzbek asylum-seekers back to face religious persecution in Uzbekistan. No explanation has ever been provided as to why Russia alone has labelled a movement which is not known to have committed any act of terrorism anywhere in the world as 'terrorist'. In occupied Crimea it has been increasingly using such cynical 'trials' and monstrously long sentences as a weapon against Crimean Tatar civic activists and journalists in particular, and against Crimean Tatars in general.

All the men, who have been imprisoned since February or April 2018, were charged either with 'organizing' a Hizb ut-Tahrir group (under Article 205.5 § 1 of Russia's criminal code) or with (the lesser charge of) 'involvement' in this group (Article 205.5 § 2). Then in January 2017, the FSB [suddenly added](#) another charge of 'attempting violent seizure of power in Russia' (Article 278). The Memorial Human Rights Centre has noted on many occasions that this extra charge is often used against men who refuse to 'cooperate' with the FSB. All the Ukrainian Muslims arrested in occupied Crimea have rejected any such 'cooperation'. It should be stressed that, as well as the preposterous nature of the charges against the men, Russia is in breach of international law since it is applying its legislation on occupied territory.

Although this was the second time Russia used its flawed 'Hizb ut-Tahrir' charges in occupied Crimea, the first had received far too little attention from international NGOs. The gratuitous violence during the arrests on 11 February 2016 (of Aliev; Bekirov; Kuku and Siruk) and the fact that Kuku was a well-known human rights activist made the international community finally take notice.

Although Kuku's previous persecution under Russian occupation is best known, there are reasons for seeing the arrests of all six men and the sentences passed by 'judges' Roman Viktorovich Saprunov; Dmitry Viktorovich Merkulov and Roman Vladimirovich Podolsky (from the Southern District Military Court in Rostov) as extremely cynical.

[Muslim Aliev](#) was the informal leader of the independent 'Alushta' Muslim Community which had on many occasions had come into conflict with the Muftiate of Crimea. The Mufti, Emirali Ablaev chose to collaborate with the Russian occupation regime and has been rewarded with semi-official status. Aliev's family is convinced that it was his religious 'dissidence' that prompted his arrest.

The 48-year-old father of four was charged with 'organizing' a Hizb ut-Tahrir group, and **sentenced to 19 years in a maximum security prison.**

55-year-old [Inver Bekirov](#) is the oldest of the men. He was initially accused with the lesser charge of 'involvement'. Then, on 21 August 2018, the 'court' in Rostov [suddenly announced](#) that it was proposing that the prosecutor change the charges against Bekirov to the more serious charge of 'organizing' a Hizb ut-Tahrir. Judges are not supposed to act as prosecutors, and Russian judges in such cases never act independently so it is quite possible that this was done merely in order to abort a trial at a point when the FSB

torture methods used to obtain 'evidence' had just been exposed. It is also known that the FSB officer (and former Ukrainian turncoat) Alexander Kompaneitsev, who has played a malignant role in all these prosecutions and in the torture of supposed 'witnesses', had threatened to arrest Bekirov's nephew, Refat Alimov, unless he gave false testimony, which he was unable to do.

He was sentenced **to 18 years' in a maximum security prison.**

[Emir-Usein Kuku](#) had very clearly been persecuted for his human rights activities, with this earlier involving a sinister attempt to abduct him. On that occasion, on 20 April 2015, it is likely that the crowd who gathered in response to his cries for help saved his life.

He was sentenced **to 12 years' in a maximum security prison.**

[Vadim Siruk](#) (30) is an ethnic Ukrainian convert to Islam, and his family are not alone in believing that he was arrested as a warning to other converts, and as an attempt to claim that Russia was not targeting Crimean Tatars.

He was sentenced **to 12 years' in a maximum security prison.**

[Arsen Dzepparov](#) (29) was probably arrested in April 2016 because he had refused to act as an FSB informer, providing false testimony against the men who had already been arrested. Dzepparov was then only 26, however he and his wife, Zarina, already had a small daughter. How could he ever explain to little Evelina what conscience and honour mean, [he asked](#), if he denounced other men who also have families and children?

He was sentenced **to 8 years' in a maximum security prison.**

[Refat Alimov](#), at 28, is the youngest and the only man who does not have his own family. It seems extremely likely that he was arrested as Bekirov's nephew.

He was sentenced **to 7 years' in a maximum security prison.**

The indictment in each of the cases had essentially accused the men only of practising their faith, and the defence demonstrated time and time again that the 'evidence' had been falsified and the 'secret witnesses' testimony could not be trusted. The 'judges' should have certainly acquitted all of the men, and were clearly aware of this since all of the sentences were lower than those demanded by the prosecutor, substantially so in the case of the four men accused of 'involvement'.

These sentences will, of course, be challenged. Until the appeal hearing, the men will probably remain imprisoned in Rostov.

Footnote: The title is from HRWF. The original title of KHPG is *The terrorist threat Russia brought to Crimea: six victims receive huge sentences.*

Recommended reading

EU Observer : <https://euobserver.com/tickers/146595>

The Moscow Times: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/11/12/russia-jails-6-crimean-tatar-activists-for-terrorism-sparking-condemnation-a68143>

CRIMEA: 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 Dzhepparov](#). 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 Dzhepparov; 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]

Six years of prison for JW Sergey Klimov

As of 5 November: 46 JW behind bars and 284 criminal cases



Photo: Sergey Klimov

HRWF with JW Russia (05.11.2019) - <https://www.jw-russia.org/en/news/19110510-1318.html> - On November 5, 2019, judge of the Oktyabrsky District Court of Tomsk Dmitriy Borisov pronounced a sentence for a local resident, Sergey Klimov, who was convicted of "organizing extremist activity": six years in a penal colony. His defense plans to appeal the unjust verdict.

Read full text in Russian at <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/19110510-1318.html>

Case of Klimov in Tomsk

Region:

Tomsk Region

Locality:

Tomsk

Case number:

11802690013000085

Current stage:

Trial in court of first instance

Suspected of:

According to the investigation, together with others he conducted religious services, which is interpreted as "organising the activity of an extremist organisation" (with reference to the decision of the Russian Supreme Court on the liquidation of all 396 registered organisations of Jehovah's Witnesses)

Article of the Russian Criminal Code:

282.2 (1)

Investigating:

Investigative Directorate of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Tomsk Region

Case initiated:

3 June 2018

Statistics about the repression of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia as of Nov 5, 2019:

Detention: 46

House arrest: 23

Ban on activities: 21

Recognizance: 105

Convicted: 11

Total under investigation: 284

Large fine on appeal instead of 26 months of forced labor for JW Valeriy Moskalenko



Photo: Valeriy Moskalenko

HRWF with JW in Russia (05.11.2019) - <https://www.jw-russia.org/en/news/19110510-1319.html> - On November 5, 2019, Khabarovsk Regional Court commuted the sentence against Valeriy Moskalenko, replacing forced labor with a fine of 500 thousand rubles—for reading an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount of Christ. Given 396 days he already spent in jail, the court released him from payment of this fine. In contrast, the prosecution earlier had requested three years in prison for him.

Read full text in Russian at <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/19110510-1319.html>

Case of Moskalenko in Khabarovsk

Region:

Khabarovsk Territory

Locality:

Khabarovsk

Case number:

11807080001000036

Current stage:

Trial in appellate court

Suspected of:

According to the investigation, together with others he conducted religious services, which is interpreted as "organising the activity of an extremist organisation" (with reference to the decision of the Russian Supreme Court on the liquidation of all 396 registered organisations of Jehovah's Witnesses)

Article of the Russian Criminal Code:

282.2 (2)

Investigating:

Investigative Department of the Directorate of the FSB of Russia for the Khabarovsk Territory

Case initiated:

1 August 2018

CRIMEA: Four months in Russian prison punishment cell

Prison officials in Russia's Kabardino-Balkariya Region will not say why they put Crimean prisoner of conscience Renat Suleimanov in a punishment cell in July, where he remains. Suleimanov was jailed as an "extremist" as an alleged adherent of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim movement. The criminal trial of Jehovah's Witness Sergei Filatov has begun. Imam Rustem Abilev was fined three months' average wages.

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (30.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/34iQFZC> - Prison officials in Kamenka in Russia's Kabardino-Balkariya Region have refused to say why in early July they placed Crimean prisoner of conscience Renat Suleimanov in a punishment cell, where he remains nearly four months later. Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea is not recognised by Ukraine or internationally. On 16 October 2019, Suleimanov's lawyer lodged a case against Russia, the occupying power, to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg against his four-year "extremism" jail term as an adherent of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement.

Suleimanov was arrested in Crimea and placed in pre-trial detention in October 2017, and in January 2019 was jailed for four years for having met with other Muslims 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 three other men charged with Suleimanov (who were given two and half year suspended sentences) told the court. "These lessons were not conspiratorial and took place in mosques".

In May the Russian authorities transferred the 49-year-old Muslim prisoner of conscience from occupied Crimea to a labour camp in Russia.

The first criminal trial of a Jehovah's Witness in Crimea since Russia annexed the peninsula in 2014 has begun in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi. The trial of Sergei Filatov on "extremism" charges began with a closed preliminary hearing on 6 September (see below).

Filatov 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 in May 2017 following Russia's nationwide ban on Jehovah's Witnesses. "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."

Three other Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses - Artyom Gerasimov and Taras Kuzio from Yalta, as well as Viktor Stashevsky from Sevastopol – are facing similar "extremism" prosecutions instigated by the Russian FSB security service (see below).

Gerasimov and Kuzio were arrested in March 2019 during FSB security service raids on at least eight Jehovah's Witness homes, during which religious literature including Bibles that have not been banned were confiscated. Stashevsky was arrested on 4 June 2019 during FSB raids on at least nine homes. All are accused of continuing Jehovah's Witness activity.

A Sevastopol court fined Imam Rustem Abilev, who was arrested in April 2019, about three months' average local wages for alleged "public calls for extremist activity" (see below).

Imam Abilev, a dentist who works as a village imam part-time, founded and with other Muslims built the Hayat (Life) Mosque in the village of Shturmoev. The mosque was officially registered by Russian authorities in June 2016 as part of the Crimean Muftiate. After Imam Abilev's April 2019 arrest, the FSB security service claimed using recordings of public village Friday prayers that Abilev conducted "closed lessons". "Local residents and activists say Rustem Abilev cannot have called for extremism," Radio Free Europe journalist Taras Ibragimov told Forum 18 on 24 April. "They insist he is not an extremist and don't believe the FSB allegations." Ibragimov told Radio Free Europe's Krym Realii service that "Friday prayers are obligatory for Muslims and all villagers would gather for them." He found it "strange" that any imam would use Friday prayers if he wanted to conduct any "alternative meetings".

Investigators had Suleimanov, Filatov, Stashevsky and Abilev added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions (see below).

In both July and October, officers of the Interior Ministry Anti-Extremism Centre raided Friday prayers at a mosque in Zarechnoe near Crimea's capital Simferopol. They were accompanied on the first raid by the OMON riot police, after which the imam narrowly avoided being fined for alleged "missionary activity". On the second raid they were accompanied by a Prosecutor's Office official. He refused to discuss anything with Forum 18 (see below).

Annexation, restrictions imposed

Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea is not recognised by Ukraine or internationally. 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.

Russia's Supreme Court banned the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement in 2009. The ban was extended to Crimea following Russia's 2014 annexation of the peninsula.

In April 2017, Russia's Supreme Court declared the Jehovah's Witness Russian headquarters in St Petersburg and all 395 local organisations "extremist", banned all their activity, and ordered their property seized by the state. The ban was immediately imposed in Russian-occupied Crimea, where 22 communities were liquidated.

Religious communities and individuals in Crimea 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. Forty such administrative prosecutions are known to have been brought in 2018 of which 28 ended with punishment.

Suleimanov: Punishment cell

Since early July, soon after his 20 June arrival at a labour camp in Russia and the end of the compulsory quarantine period, prisoner of conscience Renat Rustemovich Suleimanov (born 30 August 1969) has been in a punishment cell. Those close to him do not know why he has been given this additional punishment.

According to "unverified information", the camp administration is planning to hold Suleimanov in the punishment cell for six months, his lawyer Roman Martynovskyy told Forum 18. If true, that would mean that he would not be freed from there to normal prison conditions until January 2020.

On 18 May, prison officials began the transfer of Suleimanov from the Investigation Prison in the Crimean capital Simferopol to serve his sentence at a labour camp (correctional colony) in the village of Kamenka near Kabardino-Balkariya's regional capital Nalchik in the Russian North Caucasus.

Prison officials refused to give any information about Suleimanov. "We don't give such information by telephone," an official of the prison's Special Department told Forum 18 on 30 October. Asked about conditions in punishment cells, the official responded: "Conditions there are good." She said the prison Head, Salikh Gurizhev, was not in the office.

Prisoner of conscience Suleimanov was arrested in October 2017, accused of membership of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, which Russia's Supreme Court banned in 2009. The ban was extended to Crimea following Russia's 2014 annexation of the peninsula.

Suleimanov, a Crimean Tatar, was born in exile in Kazakhstan's then capital Almaty. When the Crimean Tatars were allowed to return to Crimea, he settled in the village of Molodezhnoe just north of Crimea's capital Simferopol. He is married with three young daughters.

Suleimanov and three friends 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 told the court at their trial. "These lessons were not conspiratorial and took place in mosques."

Fifteen months after his arrest, Crimea's Supreme Court in Simferopol finally convicted Suleimanov and the three other men on 22 January 2019. All four were sentenced under Russian 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".

The Judge jailed Suleimanov for four years in an ordinary regime labour camp, followed by one year under restrictions. He handed the other three men suspended sentences, with one year under restrictions. Suleimanov's appeals to Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow failed.

Forum 18 has been unable to find out whether Suleimanov has access to the Koran and other religious literature in punishment cell and whether he can pray unimpeded. "There's no contact from there," his lawyer Martynovskyy told Forum 18. "His letters are thoroughly checked."

Suleimanov's labour camp address:

361424 Kabardino-Balkariya
Chegemsky raion
Pos. Kamenka
Ul. D.A. Mizieva 1
Ispravitelnaya Koloniya No. 1
Suleimanovu Renatu Rustemovichu

Suleimanov: European Court appeal

Suleimanov's lawyer Roman Martynovskyy and his colleagues at the Regional Centre for Human Rights, originally based in Sevastopol but now in the Ukrainian capital Kiev, lodged a case against Russia to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg on 16 October, he told Forum 18 from Kiev on 28 October. The Court confirmed to Forum 18 that it has received the case, but has not yet assigned an Application Number to it.

Suleimanov's case argues that the Russian authorities violated his rights under Article 6 ("Right to a fair trial"), Article 7 ("No punishment without law"), Article 9 ("Freedom of thought, conscience and religion"), Article 10 ("Freedom of expression"), Article 11 ("Freedom of assembly and association") and Article 13 ("Right to an effective remedy") of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Filatov: Trial begins

The first criminal trial of a Jehovah's Witness in Crimea since Russia annexed the peninsula in 2014 has begun in the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi. The trial of Sergei Viktorovich Filatov (born 6 June 1972) began under Judge Mariya Yermakova at Dzhankoi District Court with a closed preliminary hearing on 6 September, according to court records. Seven further open hearings have been held, but at least three of them were adjourned as witnesses failed to attend.

Filatov – who is married with four children – is not under arrest but had to sign a pledge not to leave the area.

In a case brought by the Russian FSB security service, Filatov is being tried 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"). Punishments are: a fine of 400,000 to 800,000 Roubles; or 2 to 4 years' income; or 6 to 10 years' imprisonment with a ban on working in one's profession of up to 10 years and restrictions on freedom for 1 to 2 years.

Filatov was one of eight Dzhankoi Jehovah's Witnesses whose homes were raided in November 2018. The FSB accused him of continuing the activity of the local Jehovah's Witness community, which had been liquidated as "extremist". Filatov rejects the accusation against him. He told the Investigator that believers meet together not as an organisation but as private individuals under the guarantees enshrined in the Russian Constitution.

The FSB Investigator who prepared Filatov's case - Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin – did not answer his phone between 28 and 30 October.

At the 6 September hearing, Filatov renounced the services of the state-nominated lawyer as he could not afford the fees, Jehovah's Witnesses noted. Judge Yermakova rejected Filatov's request for Oleg Zakharchuk to be his public defender, but agreed to it at the 12 September hearing. She also agreed for the lawyer's fees to be paid by the state budget.

On 25 September, the court questioned the only witness who turned up, a local school teacher who had occasionally attended Jehovah's Witness meetings before the 2017 Russian Supreme Court ban. However, as he had not attended after that, he was unable to answer any questions about Filatov's activity since the ban.

On 3 October, the court questioned a "secret" witness. However, the witness "didn't understand what was being considered, didn't remember anything and had nothing to recount", Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

Three other Jehovah's Witness criminal cases

Three other Jehovah's Witnesses are facing criminal prosecution in the Crimean peninsula on "extremism" charges 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").

On 15 March, Russian FSB investigators launched a criminal case against Artyom Vyacheslavovich Gerasimov (born 13 January 1985) and Taras Grigoryevich Kuzio (born 19 June 1978) from the southern Crimean town of Yalta. Five days later, officers raided

eight Jehovah's Witness family homes in and around Yalta. Both men had to sign a pledge not to leave the area.

On 4 June, Russian FSB investigators launched a criminal case against Sevastopol resident Viktor Vladimirovich Stashevsky (born 11 July 1966). That evening, FSB officers raided at least nine local homes, with a further follow-up raid on 7 July. He had to sign a pledge not to leave the area.

The FSB Investigator handling Stashevsky's case - Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin - did not answer his phone between 28 and 30 October.

Abilev: Convicted, fined

The Russian FSB security service, which brought an "extremism"-related criminal case against Rustem Enverovich Abilev (born 18 May 1984), has succeeded in having him punished. Abilev is Imam of the Khayat (Life) mosque in the village of Shturmovoe on the eastern edge of the city of Sevastopol.

FSB officers arrested Imam Abilev on 15 April as armed, masked men, most of them in camouflage with FSB insignia, raided Khayat mosque and his nearby home. Officers seized religious literature, hand-written notes and documents, computers and mobile phones. One masked man copied files from a laptop computer.

Following his 15 April arrest, the FSB held Imam Abilev for several days in Sevastopol before transferring him to the Investigation Prison in Simferopol. He was held there until being transferred to house arrest on 7 June.

Unnamed FSB officers told the local media on 15 April and again on 23 October that Imam Abilev had "in the course of closed lessons, had conducted ideological cultivation of believers, attracting new members to extremist activity". The officers also claimed that in his sermons Imam Abilev had used banned literature and "called for violent actions against people who do not share his religious convictions".

Officers claimed that Imam Abilev had cooperated with the investigation, revealing the contacts local Salafi Muslims have with a "fundamentalist theologian" Abu Yahya Krymsky (real name Arsen Dzhelyalov). When he was in Crimea, Dzhelyalov hosted a programme on local television. After the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, he moved to the Ukrainian capital Kiev.

The FSB made public no evidence to back up their claims about Imam Abilev.

"Local residents and activists say Rustem Abilev cannot have called for extremism," Radio Free Europe journalist Taras Ibragimov told Forum 18 in April. "They insist he is not an extremist and don't believe the FSB allegations."

The FSB investigator Yuri Andreyev brought charges against Imam Abilev under Russian Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1. This punishes "public calls for extremist activity" with a maximum punishment of four years' imprisonment and a ban on specific activity for the same period. Prosecutors handed the case to Sevastopol's Balaklava District Court on 27 September, according to court records.

On 10 October, at the end of a two-day trial, Judge Natalya Zarudnyak of Balaklava District Court found Imam Abilev guilty under Russian Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1, according to court records. She fined him 100,000 Russian Roubles, the minimum punishment under the Article. According to Russian government figures, this represents about three months' average local wages.

Court press secretary Kristina Kulikovskaya said that Abilev was handed the written verdict the same day immediately after it had been delivered orally in court. "Under the court verdict, the house arrest was changed to a pledge not to leave the area and to behave appropriately until the verdict entered into legal force," she told Forum 18 on 30 October. She said no appeals against the verdict had reached the court and it entered legal force on 22 October.

Unnamed FSB officers told the local media that during the trial, Imam Abilev "fully repented" of his actions, which was why he was given only a fine.

The telephone of the FSB Investigation Department in Sevastopol went unanswered each time Forum 18 called on 29 and 30 October.

Despite Imam Abilev's arrest in April, detention until June and then house arrest until his October trial, a member of the Khayat Mosque told Forum 18 on 28 October that the authorities did not prevent the community from continuing to meet for worship.

On 2 June 2016, the Russian authorities registered the mosque community as part of the Crimean Muftiate, according to the Russian Federal Tax Service record. Abilev was one of the ten official founders.

Zarechnoe: July Mosque raid, administrative case

On 5 July, officers of the Interior Ministry Anti-Extremism Centre and the OMON riot police raided the Salgir Baba mosque in the village of Zarechnoe near the regional capital Simferopol. "After Friday prayers, all those present were held in the yard outside the mosque and the officials questioned the imam," the Crimean Solidarity group noted the same day. Arsen Kantemirov has been imam since 2008.

Although the raid was billed as an "investigative measure" related to "extremism", Simferopol District Prosecutor's Office later brought charges against Imam Kantemirov under Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 ("Russians conducting missionary activity"). Individuals are liable for a fine of 5,000 to 50,000 Roubles. For organisations (legal entities), the fine stands at 100,000 to 1 million Roubles.

The Prosecutor's Office accused Imam Kantemirov of conducting "missionary activity" because the mosque is not registered either as a religious organisation or group. (The mosque – which functions independently - had registration under Ukrainian law, but chose not to seek it under Russian law.)

The Prosecutor's Office presented the case against Imam Kantemirov to Simferopol's Magistrate's Court No. 75 on 28 August. However, that same day Magistrate Yekaterina Chumachenko sent back the case to be re-worked. Once it was re-presented, a hearing was set for 4 October but Imam Kantemirov did not turn up. At another hearing on 7 October, Magistrate Chumachenko threw out the case as it had not been completed within the prescribed three months since the "offence", according to case records.

Kantemirov's lawyer Rustem Kyamilev told Radio Free Europe's Krym.Realii on 7 October that in August and September, Prosecutors had called the imam and summoned him. Only later did the court inform him that he was facing an administrative case.

"There have been several such cases in Crimea, but people have chosen not to publicise them," the lawyer Kyamilev told Krym.Realii. "We know in some of these cases people have been given administrative punishments. Almost every fifth person in Crimea could be accused on such an accusation. Unfortunately, the trend is negative."

Zarechnoe: October Mosque raid

Officers of the Interior Ministry Anti-Extremism Centre raided the Salgir Baba mosque in Zarechnoe again on Friday 25 October. This time they were accompanied by Aleksandr Bogdan of Simferopol District Prosecutor's Office, who entered the mosque during Friday prayers, the lawyer Kyamilev told Krym.Realii the same day. Officials claim they were concerned that illegal "missionary activity" was underway.

Prosecutor Bogdan tried to talk to Imam Asan Bekirov, who was leading prayers that day, but he refused to answer any questions. "After the prayers, I came out and refused to give any testimony .. and so there were no more questions to me," Imam Bekirov was quoted by Crimean Solidarity as declaring.

Officials warned Imam Bekirov that he might be summoned to the Anti-Extremism Centre for questioning. The lawyer Kyamilev said officials urged those who had attended prayers to leave the mosque and yard, but they insisted on staying until all the officials had left.

Bogdan of the Prosecutor's Office refused absolutely to discuss the raid. "I am not obliged to give you any information," he told Forum 18 on 30 October. He then put the phone down.

32 people on trial after nationwide ban

32 Jehovah's Witnesses are now on criminal trial due to 2017 nationwide ban, with one more Jehovah's Witness on trial for alleged "public calls for extremist activity". "Extremism" trials of two Muslim readers of Said Nursi's works and two more Jehovah's Witnesses have been delayed.

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (25.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/36eDpHg> - Thirty two Jehovah's Witnesses are currently on trial on charges flowing directly from the Russian Supreme Court's 2017 nationwide ban on Jehovah's Witness activity. In Kostroma the trial of two more Jehovah's Witnesses on the same charges was halted when the judge returned the case to prosecutors, as they had not presented evidence of the law being broken. Another Jehovah's Witness is on trial for allegedly distributing material "inciting hatred and enmity".

In the Kostroma trial, Judge Yekaterina Molodova in returning the criminal case against Valeriya and Sergey Rayman to prosecutors ruled that "in this instance, there is a legal right to the profession of the Jehovah's Witness religion, which was not prohibited by the Supreme Court's decision of 20 April 2017". She also ruled that Jehovah's Witnesses "are not deprived of the right to worship independently". Court officials prevented Forum 18 from speaking to the Judge to ask for clarification of what actions would be permissible under Russian law to profess "the Jehovah's Witness religion", and "to worship independently" (see below).

All 32 Jehovah's Witnesses on charges derived from the 2017 ban are being tried under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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"). (See full list at base of this article.)

Another Jehovah's Witness, Yury Zalipayev, is still on trial under Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1 ("Public calls for extremist activity") for allegedly distributing material "inciting hatred and enmity towards a social group, 'Christian clergy'". Jehovah's Witnesses insist that these materials were planted by FSB security service officers during a search (see below).

Offences under these Criminal Code articles belong to the category of "serious crimes" for which the statute of limitations is 10 years.

Muslims who meet to study the works of late Turkish theologian Said Nursi similarly face prosecution under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Parts 1 and 2. Such Muslims typically meet in private homes to study Islam, with one or more expounding on Nursi's works, and pray, eat, and drink tea.

Such Muslims are accused of membership of an organisation the Supreme Court banned in April 2008, "Nurdzhular" (a russification of the Turkish for "Nursi followers"). Muslims in Russia deny that such an organisation has ever existed.

Cases against two male Muslim Nursi readers in Krasnoyarsk Region (Denis Zhukov and Yevgeny Sukharev) have been halted. (Sukharev's trial was already underway, but Zhukov's had not reached court.) Both men are still, however, under investigation for allegedly meeting with others to study Nursi's work. It is unknown when either man may be brought to trial (see below).

Convictions

Two male Muslim readers of Nursi's works are serving labour camp sentences:

- Artur Abdulgamidovich Kaltuyev was sentenced to three years in November 2017.
- and Ilgar Vagif-ogly Aliyev was sentenced to eight years in June 2018.

Eight male Jehovah's Witnesses have been convicted in 2019 under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2, as a direct result of the 2017 ban:

- In the first such conviction under the nationwide ban, Aleksandr Solovyov was fined 300,000 Roubles on 4 July 2019.
- Valery Moskalenko was sentenced to two years and two months' assigned labour on 2 September 2019. This will be waived because of the time he spent in detention, but he will be on probation for six months if his appeal fails. The next hearing is due to take place on 5 November, according to the Khabarovsk Regional Court website.
- On 19 September 2019, a court in Saratov imposed six jail sentences:
 - 1) Konstantin Viktorovich Bazhenov (born 10 May 1975), three years and six months;
 - 2) Aleksey Vladimirovich Budenchuk (born 27 July 1982), three years and six months;
 - 3) Feliks Khasanovich Makhammadiyev (born 14 December 1984), three years;
 - 4) Roman Aleksandrovich Gridasov (born 16 September 1978), two years;
 - 5) Gennady Vasilyevich German (born 12 June 1969), two years;
 - 6) Aleksey Petrovich Miretsky (born 14 December 1975), two years.

Both defence and prosecution lawyers are challenging the judge's ruling, Saratov Regional Prosecutor's Office told Forum 18 on 10 October. Their appeal hearings are due to begin on 7 November 2019.

Two male Jehovah's Witnesses have been convicted in 2019 for allegedly continuing the activities of the Oryol local Jehovah's Witness congregation, which was banned in 2016 before the 2017 nationwide ban:

- Danish citizen Dennis Christensen was sentenced to six years in a labour camp on 6 February 2019.

- and Sergei Skrynnikov was fined 350,000 Roubles, or about 11 months' average local wages, on 1 April 2019.

In the North Caucasus Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya, Arkadya Akopyan, was sentenced to 120 hours of community service on 27 December 2018 under Criminal Code 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"). Allegedly he had in sermons "degraded the dignity" of Orthodox and Muslim clergy, condoned Pussy Riot's demonstration in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in 2012, and gave banned "extremist" literature to his congregation.

Akopyan was later acquitted, however, in connection with the partial decriminalisation of this Criminal Code article.

Releases

Four male Muslim readers of Nursi's works have been released from labour camps in 2019: Sukhrab Abdulgamidovich Kaltuyev, Ziyavdin Badirsoltanovich Dapayev, Komil Olimovich Odilov, and Yevgeny Lvovich Kim.

Prisoner of conscience made stateless, awaiting deportation

Yevgeny Kim was released on 10 April 2019, but was deprived of his Russian citizenship, left stateless, and – on the day he completed his prison term – fined and ordered deported to his country of birth. The official reason for his deprivation of citizenship was that he did not have the correct documents – which officials had confiscated the day before the court decision. This appears to be the first time anyone has been stripped of citizenship after being convicted under Russia's harsh "anti-extremism" laws for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief.

In stripping Kim of his citizenship, and thereby leaving him stateless, Russia has broken two legally binding international treaties – the United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and the Council of Europe's European Convention on Nationality.

Kim is now in a temporary detention centre for foreign nationals in Khabarovsk, awaiting deportation to Uzbekistan - his place of birth when it was part of the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan is itself a serious violator of freedom of religion and belief.

Uzbekistan is refusing to accept Kim, fellow Muslims who have been following the case told Forum 18 on 9 October. His lawyer is making an official request to the Uzbek authorities for written confirmation that Kim has never been a citizen of Uzbekistan, as he had a Soviet passport until gaining Russian citizenship in 2005. His lawyer will then apply to a Russian court for clarification of the situation.

Kim remains on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose assets banks are obliged to freeze. Only small transactions not exceeding 10,000 Roubles per month are permitted.

Tortured in pre-trial detention, no arrests or prosecutions of torturers

While Kim was held in pre-trial detention from December 2015 in Blagoveshchensk's Investigation Prison No. 1, he was tortured, had his ribs broken, and suffered attempted rape.

Against Russia's legally binding international obligations under the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, no arrests or prosecutions of the officials who tortured Muslim prisoner of conscience Kim, or those who facilitated the torture, are yet known to have happened.

Similarly, no arrests or prosecutions of officials who tortured seven Jehovah's Witnesses in Surgut in February 2019 are known to have happened. Instead, two of the officials implicated have been given awards.

Increasing number of Jehovah's Witness criminal investigations

A total of 250 Jehovah's Witnesses in 45 regions of Russia (not counting Crimea and Sevastopol) are now (25 October 2019) known to be being criminally investigated for exercising their right to freedom of religion and belief (59 women, 191 men). The total is increasing, as on 11 October 2019, 245 Jehovah's Witnesses were known to be under investigation.

Thirty-six people are today known to be in pre-trial detention and 26 under house arrest. The remainder are under travel restrictions or specific restrictions (such as not being allowed out at night), under an obligation to present themselves to investigators when summoned, or under no known restrictions.

There have been no known recent cases of new investigations of Muslim readers of Nursi's works.

Two cases against Muslim readers of Nursi's works delayed in Krasnoyarsk Region

The case against Muslim reader of Nursi's works Denis Vladimirovich Zhukov (born 22 February 1988) has still not reached court, court officials told Forum 18.

The FSB security service initially arrested Zhukov on 23 August 2018 on board the Moscow-Krasnoyarsk train, on which he was returning home after a period spent abroad. He allegedly participated in alleged "Nurdzhular" meetings, at which he allegedly "conducted training of attendees of the gathering in the form of reading banned literature from the Risale-i Nur [Messages of Light] collection of writings, and also explaining the essence of what was read".

It was thought in May that investigators had prepared a second indictment after prosecutors sent the case back for further work to be carried out, but this now appears not to be so. The Investigative Committee instead extended the period of further investigation, but is likely to resubmit the case to the Prosecutor's Office by the end of October. It is unknown when Zhukov's trial may begin, a fellow Muslim who is following the case told Forum 18.

The FSB security service arrested Yevgeny Igoryevich Sukharev (born 9 April 1990) on 24 March 2017, and his case was lodged with a court in March 2018. He had undergone 23 hearings at Sharypovo City Court before Judge Inna Gavritskaya returned his case to

prosecutors on 28 February 2019 because of omissions and shortcomings in the indictment.

Prosecutors have now sent the case back to the Investigative Committee, a fellow Muslim who is following the case told Forum 18 on 9 October. A second expert examination suggested that his voice does not appear on audio recordings of Nursi's books being read aloud, and investigators have now ordered a third examination. It is not known when Sukharev's case may return to court.

Both Zhukov and Sukharev have been charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 ("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"). They both remain under travel restrictions, meaning that they cannot go outside their respective home towns of Krasnoyarsk and Sharypovo. After his initial arrest, Zhukov was put under house arrest for about four months. Neither man appears on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists".

Kostroma: Jehovah's Witness case sent back to prosecutors

The Investigative Committee arrested Sergey Alekseyevich Rayman (born 5 October 1996) and Valeriya Aleksandrovna Rayman (born 21 May 1993) during raids on three Jehovah's Witness homes in Kostroma on 25 July 2018.

Valeriya was held in temporary detention for 48 hours before being released under specific restrictions, such as not being allowed to go out at night, or use the telephone or internet. Sergey spent nearly two months in Kostroma's Investigation Prison No. 1 before being transferred to house arrest. He too was placed under specific restrictions on 24 October 2018. Both Raymans were put under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019.

Sverdlovsk District Court had originally accepted the case for consideration on 25 June 2019. Only one other hearing had so far taken place.

On 25 September 2019, according to the court website, Judge Yekaterina Molodova returned the criminal case against Valeriya and Sergey Rayman to prosecutors, citing violations in the indictment. The judge's ruling has not yet entered legal force.

Judge Molodova noted that "in this instance, there is a legal right to the profession of the Jehovah's Witness religion, which was not prohibited by the Supreme Court's decision of 20 April 2017". She also pointed out that "Given that the Supreme Court has repeatedly indicated in its rulings that the profession of the Jehovah's Witness religion is not prohibited by law, [Jehovah's Witnesses] are not deprived of the right to worship independently", Jehovah's Witnesses stated on 1 October.

Forum 18 telephoned Judge Molodova's office repeatedly on 24 October to seek further clarification of her ruling, including asking her what actions she considered are under Russian law permissible to profess "the Jehovah's Witness religion", and to "worship independently" - for example keeping single personal copies of Jehovah's Witness texts for use in worship.

A court spokeswoman in Judge Molodova's office would only state that the prosecution's conclusions had contained violations of the requirements of the Criminal Procedural Code. When Forum 18 asked what being able "to worship independently" meant - alone, with friends, etc. - she replied that she could not answer this question. Spokespeople on different occasions directed Forum 18 to the Court Chancellery or the Court Chair's assistant, but no one would answer Forum 18's questions. After conferring with another

person, the spokeswoman in Judge Molodova's office refused to connect Forum 18 with Judge Molodova, claiming that "as a correspondent" Forum 18 could not speak to her.

Judge Molodova also ruled that prosecutors had presented no evidence that the Raymans were founders or members of any local religious organisation in Kostroma, and, despite accusing them of holding meetings of an organisation, did not give in the case materials the full names of any participants, indicate how the Raymans had committed their alleged offences, or identify any consequences of their actions.

According to the Sverdlovsk District Court website, the prosecution registered an appeal against the return of the case at Kostroma Regional Court on 7 October 2019, which is due to be heard by Judge Aleksandr Andriyanov on 29 October 2019.

Forum 18 wrote to the Kostroma Regional Prosecutor's Office before the start of the Kostroma working day of 8 October, asking what consequences and victims of the Raymans' alleged extremist actions there had been. Forum 18 received no reply as of 25 October.

Sergey has been charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 and Valeriya under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2. Neither appears on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists". Both remain under travel restrictions.

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Full list of ongoing Jehovah's Witness criminal trials

Apart from the Maysky trial of Yury Zalipayev noted at the end of this list, all these trials are on charges of breaking Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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").

Tomsk

1) Sergei Gennadyevich Klimov (born 26 March 1970) – arrested on 3 June 2018, detained since 5 July 2018 in Investigation Prison No. 1, Tomsk; charged under Criminal Code Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 June 2019.

Prosecutors lodged his case on 28 May 2019 at October District Court in Tomsk. Twenty-one full hearings have so far taken place before Judge Dmitry Borisov, the latest on 21 October, when the prosecution asked that Klimov be imprisoned for seven years. The next hearing is due to take place on 28 October 2019; it is likely that the judge will issue a verdict on or soon after this date.

Vladivostok, Primorye

2) Dmitry Viktorovich Barmakin (born 30 May 1974) – arrested in Nakhodka on 28 July 2018; detained since 30 July 2018 in Investigation Prison No. 1, Vladivostok; released under specific restrictions on 18 October 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019.

Prosecutors lodged his case on 13 June 2019 at Pervorechensk District Court in Vladivostok. He has so far undergone seven hearings, and will appear again before Judge Stanislav Salnikov on 6 December 2019. The court is now hearing witness testimony.

Polyarny, Murmansk Region

3,4) Roman Nikolayevich Markin (born 18 March 1974) and Viktor Fyodorovich Trofimov (born 26 March 1957) – both arrested on 18 April 2018 and detained no later than 20 April 2018 in Investigation Prison No. 1, Murmansk; put under house arrest on 10 October 2018; released under travel restrictions on 7 February 2019; charged under Criminal Code Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List.

Prosecutors lodged a single case against both men on 28 May 2019 at Polyarny District Court. They have made 11 appearances to date before Judge Viktoriya Loginova, most recently on 2 October 2019; it is unknown when the next hearing will be held.

Penza

5) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Alushkin (born 30 June 1964) – arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained in Investigation Prison No. 1, Penza; put under house arrest on 14 January 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018.

6, 7, 8) Denis Vladimirovich Timoshin (born 23 March 1980), Andrei Aleksandrovich Magliv (born 20 June 1984), and Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kulyasov (born 17 April 1974) – all arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018.

9, 10) Tatyana Sergeyevna Alushkina (born 12 September 1963) and Galiya Anvarovna Olkhova (born 5 February 1970) – neither arrested or detained but criminal case opened on 11 July 2018; both under travel restrictions since at latest 15 April 2019; charged under Criminal Code Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019.

Prosecutors lodged a single case against all six defendants on 1 July 2019 at Penza's Lenin District Court. They have undergone 16 hearings to date, the latest on 10 October 2019; more are due to take place on 7, 8, 12, 14, and 15 November. Judge Roman Tanchenko has completed has consideration of the case materials and has begun hearing witness testimony.

Nadezhdinsky District, Primorye

11) Grigory Gennadyevich Bubnov (born 4 September 1965) – arrested 16 July 2018 and put under travel restrictions; charged under Criminal Code Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 July 2019.

Prosecutors lodged their case against him at Nadezhdinsky District Court on 31 May 2019. Bubnov has made 18 appearances so far before Judge Natalya Derevyagina. On 22 October, prosecutors requested a sentence of seven years' imprisonment. The final statements by both prosecution and defence continued on 23 October. It is likely that the judge will issue a verdict soon.

Beryozovsky, Kemerovo Region

12) Vadim Anatolyevich Levchuk (born 6 February 1972) – arrested on 22 July 2018; detained on 24 July 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 November 2018

13) Sergey Alekseyevich Britvin (born 18 August 1965) – arrested on 22 July 2018; detained on 24 July 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 November 2018

14) Khasan Abduvaitovich Kogut (born 7 May 1983) – arrested on 6 February 2019 on being summoned to FSB security service office; detained for 48 hours then put under house arrest on 8 February 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 February 2019

Prosecutors lodged a single case against Britvin and Levchuk at Beryozovsky City Court on 3 June 2019. They have made 13 appearances before Judge Irina Vorobyova, with their next due to take place on 31 October 2019.

Prosecutors lodged their case against Kogut at the same court on 15 July 2019. He has undergone six full hearings before Judge Yelena Bigeza, with the next due on 28 October. His defence requested that Kogut's case be combined with Britvin and Levchuk's, as they had all been accused of participation in the same worship services and lawyers did not want the outcome of one trial to be affected by that of the other; on 17 September, Judge Bigeza rejected this request. On 27 August, Kemerovo Regional Court upheld Kogut's appeal against the extension of his term in pre-trial custody, and ordered his release under travel restrictions.

Karpinsk, Sverdlovsk Region

15) Venera Nikolayevna Dulova (born 3 January 1961) – arrested no earlier than 1 August 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

16) Aleksandr Vitalyevich Pryanikov (born 18 May 1987) – arrested no earlier than 21 September 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Prosecutors lodged their case against both Jehovah's Witnesses on 14 August 2019. Dulova and Pryanikov have appeared seven times before Judge Svetlana Gabbasova at Karpinsk City Court. Their next hearing is scheduled for 31 October.

Khabarovsk

17) Stanislav Viktorovich Kim (born 5 July 1968) – arrested on 10 November 2018; detained on 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 30 January 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 and Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

18) Vitaly Vyacheslavovich Zhuk (born 8 April 1972) – arrested 10 November 2018; detained 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 14 January 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

19) Nikolai Yuryevich Polevodov (born 10 February 1970) – arrested on 10 November 2018; detained on 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 14 January 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 and Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

20, 21, 22) Tatyana Valentinovna Zhuk (born 13 March 1973), Maya Pavlovna Karpushkina (born 19 March 1949), and Svetlana Grigoryevna Sedova (born 8 June 1969) – all arrested on 10 November 2018 and put under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Prosecutors lodged a single case against all six Jehovah's Witnesses on 18 July 2017 at Industrial District Court in Khabarovsk. Their first hearing took place on 9 September 2019 – the next three have been scheduled for 28 October, 5 November, and 13 November 2019.

Vilyuchinsk, Kamchatka

23) Yelena Vyacheslavovna Popova, born 10 September 1963 – arrested on 30 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours, extended to 72 hours; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; released from house arrest on appeal on 10 August 2018; suspect under Criminal Code Articles 282.2, Part 1 and 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

24) Mikhail Yuryevich Popov, born 25 May 1962 – arrested on 30 July 2018; detained on 1 August 2018; released on appeal on 9 August 2018; suspect under Criminal Code Articles 282.2, Part 1 and 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

Prosecutors lodged their case against the Popovs at Vilyuchinsk City Court on 3 September 2019. One hearing appears to have taken place so far before Judge Aleksandr Ishchenko, on 15 October; the next will be held on 31 October.

Perm

25) Aleksey Aleksandrovich Metsger, born 8 September 1975 – not believed to have been arrested or detained; case opened on 25 April 2019; placed under travel restrictions on 10 June 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Prosecutors lodged their case at Ordzhonikidze District Court on 24 September 2019. Judge Svetlana Chereueva has presided over six hearings so far, the latest on 25 October 2019. It is unknown when Metsger will next appear in court.

Vladivostok

26) Valentin Pavlovich Osadchuk, born 15 March 1976 – arrested on 19 April 2018; detained on 23 April 2018; put under house arrest on 18 January 2019; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 (upgraded from Part 2 on 1 April 2019); added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

27) Nailya Sunatovna Kogay, born 5 October 1951 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

28) Lyubov Aleksandrovna Galaktionova, born 14 July 1942 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

29) Nina Ivanovna Purge, born 19 June 1940 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

30) Raisa Mikhailovna Usanova, born 28 September 1947 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

31) Yelena Viktorovna Zayshchuk, born 25 August 1934 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

32) Nadezhda Anatolyevna Anoykina, born 11 January 1958 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

Prosecutors lodged a single case against all seven Jehovah's Witnesses on 2 October 2019 at Vladivostok's Lenin District Court. Judge Anton Sklizkov has overseen three hearings so far, most recently on 24 October; the next will be held on 29 October 2019.

Maysky, Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya

33) Yury Viktorovich Zalipayev, born 8 October 1962 – case opened in August 2017; put under travel restrictions on 24 April 2018; currently on trial under Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1 ("Public calls for extremist activity"); second charge under Criminal Code Article 282, Part 1 dropped on 22 January 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Zalipayev made his most recent appearance on 19 July 2019, the 28th hearing in his case in the past year. At this hearing, Judge Yelena Kudryavtsev ordered further "expert analysis", and scheduled proceedings to resume on 4 February 2020.

Jehovah's Witness criminal cases

Full list of 237 Jehovah's Witnesses across Russia facing criminal prosecution on extremism-related charges for exercising freedom of religion or belief. Of these, 33 are in pre-trial detention. Trials of 25 are already underway. Eight more have already been convicted. Raids, arrests and interrogations continue.

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (11.10.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2oIO0t0> - A total of 237 Jehovah's Witnesses are now believed to be facing criminal prosecution under the Extremism Law for exercising their freedom of religion and belief, as raids, arrests, and interrogations continue across Russia. Another eight have already been convicted.



Protest in support of Jehovah's Witnesses, St Petersburg, 23 March 2019
Tatyana Voltskaya (RFE/RL)

Twenty-five people are on trial. All but one of the Jehovah's Witnesses currently under investigation or in court have been charged with or are suspected of organising, participating in, or financing the activities of a banned extremist organisation – these investigations are a direct result of the Supreme Court's [2017 decision to liquidate the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre and all its subdivisions as "extremist"](#) and outlaw all their activities.

Between January 2018 and October 2019, officers have conducted raids in the following 43 of Russia's 83 federal subjects (not counting Crimea and Sevastopol): Amur, Arkhangelsk, Republic of Bashkortostan, Belgorod, Bryansk, Dagestan, Ivanovo, Jewish Autonomous Region, Kaluga, Kamchatka, Republic of Kareliya, Kemerovo, Khabarovsk, Republic of Khakasiya, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, Kirov, Kostroma, Krasnoyarsk, Magadan, Mari El Republic, Republic of Mordoviya, Moscow Region, Murmansk, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Oryol, Penza, Perm, Primorye, Pskov, Rostov, Republic of Sakha-Yakutiya, Sakhalin, Saratov, Smolensk, Stavropol, Sverdlovsk, Republic of Tatarstan, Tomsk, Ulyanovsk, and Volgograd.

Fifty-six women and 181 men are thought to have consequently been charged or named as suspects under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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"), or Part 1.1 ("Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation"), as well as Criminal Code Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing of extremist activity").

The oldest and youngest people facing prosecution are Yelena Zayshchuk, born in 1934, and Darya Dulova, born in 2000.

Thirty-three people are known to be in pre-trial detention (seven women, 26 men). Two people have been ordered to be detained but have fled the country. Another 27 are under house arrest (5 women, 22 men) and 87 under travel restrictions (28 women, 59 men). Officials have placed 22 people (1 woman, 21 men) under specific sets of restrictions (such as not being allowed to go out at night or use the telephone or internet). One woman and six men are under an obligation to appear before investigators promptly when summoned. Fifty-six people (13 women, 43 men) appear to be under no restrictions. The status of a further three people (one woman, two men) is currently unknown.

Officials have had 160 of these people added to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", [whose assets banks are obliged to freeze](#), except for small transactions (Two men already convicted, Dennis Christensen and Sergei Skrynnikov, also appear on the List.)

Eight people are on the Interior Ministry's federal wanted list as their whereabouts are unknown. Two are known to have left Russia; three others have also fled the country but are not on the wanted list.



Dennis Christensen behind windows in court, 28 January 2019
Human Rights Watch [[CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 US](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/)]

Eight Jehovah's Witnesses have already been convicted under Articles 282.2, Parts 1 and 2 as a direct result of the 2017 ban. Aleksandr Solovyov, from Perm, [was fined 300,000 Roubles](#) under Article 282.2, Part 2 on 4 July 2019. Valery Moskalenko was [sentenced to 2 years and 2 months' assigned labour](#) under Article 282.2, Part 2 on 2 September 2019, which will be waived because of the time he spent in detention; he will, however, be on probation for six months should his appeal be unsuccessful. On 19 September 2019, a court in Saratov [imposed the following sentences](#): Konstantin Bazhenov and Aleksey Budenchuk – 3 years and 6 months' imprisonment; Feliks Makhammadiyev – 3 years' imprisonment; Roman Gridasov, Gennady German, and Aleksey Miretsky – 2 years' imprisonment.

Earlier in 2019, two Jehovah's Witnesses were convicted of extremism-related offences not related to the 2017 ban. Dennis Christensen was [sentenced to six years' imprisonment on 6 February 2019](#) under Article 282.2, Part 1 for "continuing the activities" of the Oryol Jehovah's Witness community, which was liquidated in 2016; he appealed unsuccessfully on 23 May 2019. Sergei Skrynnikov, also accused of "continuing the activities" of the Oryol congregation, [was fined 350,000 Roubles on 1 April 2019](#) under Article 282.2, Part 2. A third man, Arkadya Akopyan, was [initially found guilty](#) under Article 282, Part 1 (Incitement of hatred), but was [later acquitted](#) in connection with the partial decriminalisation of this offence. A fourth Jehovah's Witness, Yury Zalipayev, [remains on trial](#) under Article 280, Part 1 (Public calls for extremist activity), but has had a further charge under Article 282, Part 1 dropped.

Raids and arrests

The raids on Jehovah's Witness homes all appear to follow a similar pattern. Officials from a variety of agencies arrive at Jehovah's Witnesses' addresses usually late at night or early in the morning. They may include the FSB, the Investigative Committee, the National Guard, riot police, and officers from the Interior Ministry's Centre for Combating. The occupants are sometimes made to lie on the floor or face the wall while investigators search their homes.

Officers then confiscate a similar range of possessions – phones, other electronic devices, bank cards, personal photographs, and books – and take the Jehovah's Witnesses,

including children and the elderly, to a police station, FSB office, or Investigative Committee branch for questioning.

Such questioning can last for several hours, after which most people are released (some under travel restrictions). Others are kept in temporary detention until investigators decide whether to apply to a court for longer-term restrictive measures – they must do this within 48 hours of the initial detention.

A judge then decides whether to grant an investigator's request to place an individual in detention or under house arrest. An initial period of detention/house arrest lasts for two months from the date the criminal case was opened (usually on or shortly before the date of the raid). Towards the end of this period, investigators must apply to the court again to seek an extension. Detainees themselves may appeal to a higher court to have these restrictive measures lifted or reduced – on occasion, such appeals have been successful.

Increasingly in 2019, investigators have opened cases against individuals without arresting them or raiding their homes, but simply summoning them for questioning.

Extremism charges

Jehovah's Witnesses have largely been charged (or named as suspects) under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 or Part 2 ("Organisation of" or "Participation in the activities of a banned extremist organisation"). For exercising their right to freedom of religion and belief by meeting for worship, they stand accused of "continuing the activities" of the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre and its subsidiary local organisations, all of which the Russian Supreme Court ruled extremist and ordered liquidated in April 2017.

Investigators have also charged a few individuals under Criminal Code Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing of extremist activity"), or Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1.1 ("Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation").

These prosecutions are happening despite the Supreme Court judges' insistence when they issued the ruling that it "does not amount to prohibition of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses as such", and despite the fact that the Russian government has twice claimed that the ban "does not contain a restriction or prohibition on individual profession of [Jehovah's Witness] teachings".

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Full list of 237 under criminal investigation, sentenced or on trial

Name, date of birth – date of initial arrest; date of decision to put in detention/under house arrest/under travel restrictions; charged/suspect under Criminal Code Article; whether or not on Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists"

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- Pre-trial Detention

Bryansk Region – Novozybkov

1) Olga Sergeyevna Silayeva, born 11 May 1988 – arrested on 11 June 2019; detained on 11 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on

10 October 2019

2) Tatyana Viktorovna Shamsheva, born 7 June 1977 – arrested on 11 June 2019; detained on 11 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 10 October 2019

Republic of Dagestan

3) Anton Olegovich Dergalev, born 24 May 1985 – arrested on 1 June 2019; detained on 1 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

4) Arsen Nazimovich Abdullayev, born 21 January 1979 – arrested on 1 June 2019; detained on 1 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

5) Marat Nazimovich Abdulgalimov, born 8 November 1991 – arrested on 1 June 2019; detained on 1 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

6) Mariya Viktorovna Karpova, born 18 November 1980 – arrested on 1 June 2019; detained on 1 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

Kaluga

7) Dmitry Yevgenyevich Kuzin, born 10 July 1965 – arrested on 26 June 2019; detained on 28 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Roman Sergeyevich Makhnyov, born 4 February 1976 – arrested on 26 June 2019; detained on 28 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kemerovo

9) Sergey Alekseyevich Britvin, born 18 August 1965 – arrested on 22 July 2018; detained on 24 July 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 November 2018

10) Vadim Anatolyevich Levchuk, born 6 February 1972 – arrested on 22 July 2018; detained on 24 July 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 November 2018

Krasnoyarsk – Sharypovo

11) Anton Olegovich Ostapenko, born 12 January 1991 – arrested on 19 April 2019; detained on 24 April 2019; Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Mari El Republic – Yoshkar-Ola

12) Yekaterina Gennadyevna Pegasheva, born 4 September 1989 – arrested on 3 October 2019; detained no later than 5 October 2019; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 10 October 2019

Nizhny Novgorod Region – Pavlovo

13) Aleksandr Vladimirovich Vavilov, born 5 October 1967 – arrested on 17 July 2018; detained on 17 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Aleksey Borisovich Oreshkov, born 21 June 1971 – arrested on 17 July 2018; detained on 17 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Novosibirsk

14) Yury Prokopyevich Savelyov, born 1 January 1954 – arrested on 8 November 2018; detained on 8 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 18 December 2018

Primorye – Vladivostok

15) Dmitry Viktorovich Barmakin, born 30 May 1974 – arrested in Nakhodka on 28 July 2018; detained on 30 July 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

16) Irina Gennadyevna Buglak, born 25 January 1975 – arrested in Partizansk on 19 April 2019; detained on 20 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

Rostov-on-Don

17) Arsen Vilenovich Avanesov, born 24 September 1983 – arrested on 22 May 2019; detained on 22 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 13 June 2019

18) Vilen Shagenovich Avanesov, born 22 October 1952 – arrested on 22 May 2019; detained on 22 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 13 June 2019

19) Aleksandr Mikhailovich Parkov, born 5 September 1967 – – arrested on 22 May 2019; detained on 22 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 13 June 2019

Smolensk

20) Yevgeny Vladimirovich Deshko, born 7 May 1989 – arrested on 29 April 2019; detained on 1 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

21) Valery Anatolyevich Shalyev, born 23 September 1977 – arrested on 25 April 2019; detained on 26 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

22) Viktor Ivanovich Malkov, born 21 February 1959 – arrested on 25 April 2019; detained on 26 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

23) Tatyana Stepanovna Galkevich, born 2 August 1959 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 4 July 2019

24) Valentina Ivanovna Vladimirova, born 15 April 1956 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to

Rosfinmonitoring List on 4 July 2019

Stavropol – Neftekumsk

25) Aleksandr Andreyevich Akopov, born 4 November 1992 – arrested on 9 December 2018; detained on 12 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

26) Konstantin Valeryevich Samsonov, born 8 April 1977 – arrested on 9 December 2018; detained on 12 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

27) Shamil Shapiyevich Sultanov, born 16 March 1977 – arrested on 9 December 2018; detained on 12 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Tomsk

28) Sergey Gennadyevich Klimov, born 26 March 1970 – arrested on 3 June 2018; detained on 5 June 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 June 2019

Volgograd

29) Sergei Nikolayevich Melnik, born 29 June 1972 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

30) Vyacheslav Ivanovich Osipov, born 17 October 1970 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

31) Valery Anatolyevich Rogozin, born 25 March 1962 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

32) Igor Artyomovich Yegozaryan, born 17 January 1965 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

- Detention ordered in absentia

Oryol

1) Vitaly Gennadyevich Maksimov, born 27 December 1980 – detention ordered in absentia (on wanted list); charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 September 2018

2) Dmitry Andreyevich Prikhodko, born 17 March 1986 – detention ordered in absentia (on wanted list); charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 September 2018

- House Arrest

Ivanovo – Furmanovo

1) Yevgeny Andreyevich Spirin, born 24 February 1986 – arrested on 27 January 2019; detained on 28 January 2019; put under house arrest on 5 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kemerovo

2) Aleksandr Iosifovich Bondarchuk, born 13 July 1974 – arrested on 22 July 2019 and detained for two days; put under house arrest on 24 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 August 2019

3) Sergey Nikolayevich Yavushkin, born 4 August 1960 – arrested on 22 July 2019 and detained for two days; put under house arrest on 24 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 August 2019

Khabarovsk

4) Stanislav Viktorovich Kim, born 5 July 1968 – arrested on 10 November 2018; detained on 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 30 January 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

5) Vitaly Vyacheslavovich Zhuk, born 8 April 1972 – arrested 10 November 2018; detained 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 14 January 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Moscow Region – Chekhov

6) Zinaida Krutyakova, unknown date of birth – arrested on 3 October and detained for 1 day; put under house arrest on 4 October; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part ?; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

7) Konstantin Zherebtsov, unknown date of birth – arrested on 3 October and detained for 1 day; put under house arrest on 4 October; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part ?; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Vitaly Nikiforov, unknown date of birth – arrested on 3 October and detained for 1 day; put under house arrest on 4 October; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part ?; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

9) Nikolai Yakovlev, unknown date of birth – arrested on 3 October and detained for 1 day; put under house arrest on 4 October; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part ?; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Novosibirsk

10) Aleksandr Ivanovich Seryodkin, born 1 December 1954 – arrested on 19 April 2019; put under house arrest on 21 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 8 May 2019

11) Valery Vladimirovich Maletskov, born 13 September 1974 – arrested on 19 April 2019 and detained for 1 day; put under house arrest on 21 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 8 May 2019

Penza

12) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kulyasov, born 17 April 1974 – arrested on 15 July 2018 and

detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

13) Andrei Aleksandrovich Magliv, born 20 June 1984 – arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

14) Denis Vladimirovich Timoshin, born 23 March 1980 – arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

15) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Alushkin, born 30 June 1964 – arrested on 15 July 2018; detained on 17 July 2018; put under house arrest on 14 January 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

Primorye – Spassk-Dalny

16) Dmitry Yuryevich Malyovany, born 24 April 1990 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

17) Olga Alekseyevna Opaleva, born 22 April 1952 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

18) Olga Aleksandrovna Panyuta, born 11 June 1959 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

19) Aleksei Borisovich Trofimov, born 23 April 1959 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

20) Yury Nikolayevich Belosludtsev, born 1 May 1964 – arrested on 17 March 2019 in Luchegorsk; detained on 19 March 2019; put under house arrest on 26 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

21) Sergei Aleksandrovich Sergeyev, born 6 September 1955 – arrested on 17 March 2019 in Luchegorsk; detained on 19 March 2019; put under house arrest on 24 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 and 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 July 2019

Primorye – Ussuriysk

22) Sergei Viktorovich Melnikov, born 2 May 1973 – arrested on 5 June 2019; detained on 5 June 2019; put under house arrest on 4 October 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

Rostov-on-Don

23) Ruslan Ramizovich Alyyev, born 21 June 1987 – arrested on 10 June 2019 and detained for one day; put under house arrest on 11 June 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

24) Semyon Olegovich Baybak, born 14 May 1997 – arrested on 10 June 2019 and detained for one day; put under house arrest on 11 June 2019; suspect under Article

282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

Smolensk

25) Ruslan Nikolayevich Korolyov, born 8 August 1982 – arrested on 25 April 2019; detained on 26 April 2019; put under house arrest on 14 August 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

26) Natalya Igoryevna Sorokina, born 12 March 1975 – arrested in Sychyovka on 7 October 2018; detained on 9 October 2018; put under house arrest on 15 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

27) Mariya Vladimirovna Troshina, born 13 February 1977 – arrested in Sychyovka on 7 October 2018; detained on 9 October 2018; put under house arrest on 15 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

- Travel Restrictions

Amur – Blagoveshchensk

1) Dmitry Mikhailovich Golik, born 26 March 1987 – arrested on 20 July 2018 but not detained; placed under travel restrictions on 20 July; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 August 2018

2) Aleksei Aleksandrovich Berchuk, born 17 November 1975 – arrested on 21 January 2019 and detained temporarily, then placed under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 August 2018

Amur – Zeya

3) Konstantin Moiseyenko – arrested 21 March 2019; put under travel restrictions the same day; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Bashkortostan – Dyurtyuli

4) Anton Nikolayevich Lemeshev, born 18 February 1987 – arrested on 18 October 2018; detained on 20 October 2018; put under house arrest on 31 October 2018; released under travel restrictions on 15 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Bashkortostan – Ufa

5) Anatoly Sergeyevech Vilitkevich, born 15 September 1986 – arrested on 10 April 2018; detained on 12 April 2018; placed under house arrest on 21 June 2018; released under travel restrictions on 28 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 7 July 2018

Ivanovo – Shuya

6) Aleksey Albertovich Arkhipov, born 13 July 1960 – arrested on 29 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 22 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

7) Yelena Valentinovna Mikhailova, born 9 August 1983 – arrested 29 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 27 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part

2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Svetlana Anatolyevna Ryzhkova, born 22 June 1953 – arrested on 26 June 2018, unknown if detained; put under travel restrictions 27 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

9) Svetlana Yuryevna Shishina, born 16 November 1975– arrested 29 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 22 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Dmitry Vasilyevich Mikhailov, born 25 October 1977 – arrested on 19 April 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; released under travel restrictions on 15 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Jewish Autonomous Region – Birobidzhan

11) Alam Abdulaziz ogly Aliyev, born 14 January 1963 – arrested on 17 May 2018; detained on 18 May 2018; released on appeal on 25 May 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List between 17 May and 13 June 2018

12) Valery Sergeyevich Kriger, born 11 January 1968 – raided on 17 May 2018 but not arrested or detained; put under travel restrictions on 29 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 February 2019

13) Sergei Aleksandrovich Shulyarenko, born 16 November 1984 – raided on 21 March 2019 but not arrested or detained; put under travel restrictions on 21 March 2019; charged under Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 March 2019

14) Dmitry Nikolayevich Zagulin, born 29 December 1973 – raided on 2 April 2019 but not arrested or detained; put under travel restrictions on 2 April 2019; charged under Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 March 2019

15) Yevgeny Viktorovich Yegorov, born 19 February 1991 – not arrested or detained; case opened on 29 July 2019; put under travel restrictions on 7 August 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 August 2019

16) Igor Olegovich Tsaryov, born 14 May 1974 – not arrested or detained; case opened on 30 July 2019; put under travel restrictions on 13 August 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 August 2019

17) Artur Sergeyevich Lokhvitsky, born 31 January 1986 – not arrested or detained; case opened on 31 July 2019; put under travel restrictions on 15 August 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 August 2019

Kabardino-Balkariya – Maysky

18) Yury Viktorovich Zalipayev, born 8 October 1962 – case opened in August 2017; put under travel restrictions on 24 April 2018; currently on trial under Article 280 Part 1; second charge under Article 282 Part 1 dropped on 22 January 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kamchatka – Yelizovo

19) Konstantin Aleksandrovich Bazhenov, born 24 July 1977 – arrested on 19 August

2018; detained on 21 August 2018; released on appeal on 29 August 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October

20) Snezhana Yevgenyevna Bazhenova, born 20 December 1977 – arrested on 19 August 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 21 August 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

21) Vera Ivanovna Zolotova, born 20 October 1946 – arrested on 19 August 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 21 August 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

Republic of Kareliya – Kondopoga

22) Aleksey Valeryevich Smelov, born 16 November 1974 – arrested on 31 July 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 31 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 August 2019

Republic of Kareliya – Petrozavodsk

23) Maksim Vladimirovich Amosov, born 28 December 1976 – arrested on 31 July 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 31 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 August 2019

24) Nikolai Grigoryevich Leshchenko, born 16 July 1962 – arrested on 31 July 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 2 August 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

25) Mikhail Genrikhovich Gordeyev, born 21 November 1959 – arrested on 5 September 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 5 September 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 10 October 2019

26) Dmitry Vasilyevich Ravnushkin, born 1975 – arrested on 20 September 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 20 September 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kemerovo – Beryozovsky

27) Khasan Abduvaitovich Kogut, born 7 May 1983 – arrested on 6 February 2019 on being summoned to FSB office; detained for 48 hours then put under house arrest on 8 February 2019; put under travel restrictions on 26 August 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 February 2019

Khabarovsk

28) Tatyana Valentinovna Zhuk, date of birth unknown – arrested on 10 November 2018 and put under travel restrictions; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

29) Maya Pavlovna Karpushkina, date of birth unknown – arrested on 10 November 2018 and put under travel restrictions; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

30) Svetlana Grigoryevna Sedova, born 8 June 1969 – arrested on 10 November and put under travel restrictions; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

31) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Aksyonov, born 19 June 1967 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 24 July 2019; put under travel restrictions on 24 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Surgut

32) Vyacheslav Pavlovich Boronos, born 1 June 1966 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 15 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

33) Aleksei Nikolayevich Plekhov, born 28 July 1977 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 17 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

34) Sergei Vladimirovich Volosnikov, born 7 November 1977 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; unknown when put under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1 and 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

35) Leonid Nikitevich Rysikov, born 2 January 1950 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; unknown when put under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

Kirov

36) Andrzej [Anatolyevich] Oniszczyk, Polish citizen, born 3 October 1968 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained 12 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 3 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

37) Andrei Sergeyevich Suvorkov, 26 February 1993 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained on 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 1 February 2019; put under travel restrictions on 13 August 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

Kostroma

38) Sergey Alekseyevich Rayman, born 5 October 1996 – arrested on 25 July 2018; detained on 26 July 2018; placed under house arrest on 21 September 2018; placed under specific restrictions on 24 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019; case reached court under Article 282.2 Part 1 but was sent back; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

39) Valeriya Aleksandrovna Rayman, born 21 May 1993 – arrested on 25 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; released on 27 July 2018 and put under specific restrictions; put under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019; case reached court under Article 282.2 Part 2 but was sent back; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Magadan

40) Sergei Artyomovich Agadzhanov, born 20 October 1957 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 21 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

41) Lyubov Ivanovna Asatryan, born 11 January 1951 - arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 21 March 2019; charged

under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

42) Anastasiya Petrovna Chibisova, born 25 October 1994 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 20 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

43) Galina Sergeevich Dergacheva, born 16 December 1956 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 21 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

44) Inna Alekseyevna Kardakova, born 2 August 1980 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 20 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

45) Irina Vladimirovna Khvostova, born 15 March 1992 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 21 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

46) Viktor Anatolyevich Revyakin, born 2 March 1957 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 20 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

47) Mikhail Yuryevich Solntsev, born 26 December 1962 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 20 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

48) Oksana Mikhailovna Solntseva, born 17 August 1966 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions on 20 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

49) Konstantin Nikolayevich Petrov, born 9 August 1986 – arrested on 30 May 2018; detained on 1 June 2018; released from detention on appeal on 3 August 2018 and placed under house arrest; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

50) Ivan Grigoryevich Puyda, born 5 November 1978 – arrested in Khabarovsk on 30 May 2018; detained in Magadan on 1 June 2018; put under house arrest on 5 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

51) Sergey Liviyevich Yerkin, born 23 June 1953 – arrested on 30 May 2018; detained on 1 June 2018; put under house arrest on 5 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

52) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Zyablov, born 9 March 1977 – arrested on 30 May 2018; detained on 1 June 2018; put under house arrest on 5 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 27 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

Mordoviya – Saransk

53) Vladimir Andreyevich Atryakhin, born 29 September 1987 – arrested on 6 February 2019; detained no later than 8 February 2019; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 April 2019

Murmansk – Polyarny

54) Roman Nikolayevich Markin, born 18 March 1974 – arrested on 18 April 2018; detained no later than 20 April 2018; put under house arrest on 10 October; released under travel restrictions on 7 February 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

55) Viktor Fyodorovich Trofimov, born 26 March 1957 – arrested on 18 April 2018; detained no later than 20 April 2018; put under house arrest on 10 October; released under travel restrictions on 7 February 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Novosibirsk

56) Marina Stanislavovna Chaplykina, born 16 February 1971 – arrested on 19 April 2019 and detained for 1 day; put under travel restrictions on 21 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 8 May 2019

Omsk

57) Anastasiya Andreyevna Polyakova, born 25 May 1984 – arrested on 4 July 2018; detained on 6 July 2018; put under house arrest on 4 December 2018; released under travel restrictions on 5 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 August 2018

58) Sergei Valeryevich Polyakov, 28 April 1972 – arrested on 4 July 2018; detained on 6 July 2018; put under house arrest on 4 December 2018; released under travel restrictions on 5 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1 and Article 282.3 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 August 2018

Orenburg

59) Pavel Aleksandrovich Lekontsev, born 5 July 1981 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

60) Sergey Viktorovich Logunov, born 28 November 1962 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

61) Aleksey Nikolayevich Matveyev, born 23 April 1983 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

62) Olga Timofeyevna Sandu, born 31 March 1984 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018 but has since left Russia (on federal wanted list); charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

63) Fail Samigullovich Shangareyev, born 16 December 1960 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018 but has since left Russia (on federal wanted list); charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

64) Nikolay Nikolayevich Zhugin, born 14 February 1976 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Penza

65) Tatyana Sergeevna Alushkina, born 12 September 1963 – not arrested or detained but case opened on 11 July 2018; put under travel restrictions no later than 15 April 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

66) Galiya Anvarovna Olkhova, born 5 February 1970 – unknown whether arrested or detained but case opened on 11 July 2018; put under travel restrictions no later than 15 April 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

Perm

67) Viktor Aleksandrovich Kuchkov, born 28 June 1967 – arrested on 17 September 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 20 September 2018; put under travel restrictions on 27 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

68) Igor Valeryevich Turik, born 25 June 1968 – arrested on 17 September 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 20 September 2018; put under travel restrictions on 27 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

69) Aleksey Aleksandrovich Metsger, born 8 September 1975 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 25 April 2019; placed under travel restrictions on 10 June 2019?; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Primorye – Volno-Nadezhdinskoye

70) Grigory Gennadyevich Bubnov, born 4 September 1965 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 16 July 2018; put under travel restrictions on 3 April 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 July 2019

Primorye – Ussuriysk

71) Sergey Stanislavovich Korolchuk, born 22 October 1967 – arrested on 18 June 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 21 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

Primorye – Vladivostok

72) Valentin Pavlovich Osadchuk, born 15 March 1976 – arrested on 19 April 2018; detained on 23 April 2018; put under house arrest on 18 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1 (upgraded from Part 2 on 1 April 2019); added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

73) Nailya Sunatovna Kogay, born 5 October 1951 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

74) Lyubov Aleksandrovna Galaktionova, born 14 July 1942 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

75) Nina Ivanovna Purge, born 19 June 1940 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

76) Raisa Mikhailovna Usanova, born 28 September 1947 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

77) Yelena Viktorovna Zayshchuk, born 25 August 1934 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

78) Nadezhda Anatolyevna Anoykina, born 11 January 1958 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

79) Yelena Mikhailovna Barmakina, born 9 October 1967 – not arrested or detained; put under travel restrictions on 13 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 12 September 2019

Sakha-Yakutiya – Lensk

80) Igor Nikolayevich Ivashin, born 16 April 1976 – arrested on 30 June 2018 but not detained; put under obligation to present himself to authorities on 2 July 2018; put under travel restrictions on 24 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Sverdlovsk – Karpinsk

81) Venera Nikolayevna Dulova, born 3 January 1961 – arrested on 1 August 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

82) Aleksandr Vitalyevich Pryanikov, born 18 May 1987 – arrested no earlier than 21 September 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

83) Darya Igoryevna Dulova, born 10 March 2000 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 30 May 2019; placed under travel restrictions on 24 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Tatarstan – Naberezhnyye Chelny

84) Ilkham Shamilyevich Karimov, born 9 February 1981 – arrested on 27 May 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; put under house arrest on 9 November 2018; released on 22 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 7 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

85) Konstantin Viktorovich Matrashov, born 22 August 1988 arrested on 27 May 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; put under house arrest on 14 November 2018; released on 22 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 10 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

86) Vladimir Nikolayevich Myakushin, born 6 November 1987 – arrested on 27 May 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; put under house arrest on 13 November 2018; released

on 22 March 2019; put under travel restrictions on 10 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

87) Aydar Maratovich Yulmetyev, born 10 August 1993 – arrested on 29 May 2018; detained on 31 May 2018; put under house arrest on 13 November 2018; released on 25 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 19 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 25 July 2019

- Specific Restrictions

Arkhangelsk

1) Yevgeny Viktorovich Yakku, born 22 February 1980 – arrested on 18 February 2019 and detained for 1 day; released under specific restrictions on 19 February 2019 – not allowed to go out at night, to hold “meetings and gatherings” at home, to use the telephone, post, or internet, or to communicate with anyone else involved in the case; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1.1 and Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 4 April 2019

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Surgut

2) Sergey Pavlovich Loginov, born 18 September 1961 – arrested on 15 February 2019; detained on 18 February 2019; released on 11 April 2019 and put under specific restrictions – not allowed to go out at night, communicate with others involved in the case, or use the post, telephone, or internet; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 1.1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Uray

3) Yevgeny Nikolayevich Kayryak, born 29 March 1986 – arrested on 15 February 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 24 March 2019; released on 30 May and put under specific restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October

4) Andrey Vladimirovich Sazonov, born 15 August 1980 – arrested on 6 February 2019; detained on 8 February 2019; put under house arrest on 26 February 2019; released on 22 September and put under specific restrictions – not allowed to communicate with others involved in the case, or use the post, telephone, or internet; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 10 October

Kirov

5) Andrei Vladimirovich Shchepin, born 11 June 1991 – arrested on 26 March 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under specific restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 April 2019

Krasnoyarsk

6) Andrei Garafetanovich Stupnikov, born 17 September 1973 – arrested on 3 July 2018; detained on 4 July 2018; put under house arrest on 1 March 2019; released on 2 July 2019 and put under specific restrictions – not allowed to use the post or internet or communicate with others in the case; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 June 2019

Nizhny Novgorod

7) Sergey Vitalyevich Verkhoturov, born 9 December 1974 – arrested on 17 July 2019 but not detained; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Denis Yuryevich Tsaryov, born 30 May 1983 – arrested on 17 July 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019 but has since left Russia; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

9) Eduard Olegovich Smirnov, born 11 August 1988 – arrested on 17 July 2019 but not detained; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019 but has since left Russia; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Maksim Mikhailovich Zavrazhnov, born 9 July 1981 – arrested on 17 July 2019 but not detained; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

11) Oleg Vladimirovich Konshin, born 10 May 1971 – arrested on 17 July 2019 but not detained; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

12) Sergey Ivanovich Malyanov, born 14 July 1967 – arrested on 17 July 2019 but not detained; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

13) Vladimir Ivasikovich Manushakyan, born 23 April 1970 – arrested on 17 July 2019 but not detained; put under specific restrictions on 18 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Orenburg

14) Aleksandr Gennadyevich Suvorov, born 20 April 1980 – arrested on 16 May 2018; detained on 19 May 2018; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; put under specific restrictions on 14 October 2018 – not allowed to go out at night, send or receive post, or use other means of communication; whereabouts now unknown – on federal wanted list; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

15) Vladimir Yuryevich Kochnev, born 15 October 1979 – arrested on 16 May 2018; detained on 19 May 2018; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; put under specific restrictions on 14 October 2018 – not allowed to send or receive post, or use other means of communication; night-time curfew lifted on 12 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

16) Vladislav Sergeyeovich Kolbanov, born 27 November 1992 – arrested on 16 May 2018; put under house arrest on 19 May 2018; put under specific restrictions on 14 October 2018 – not allowed to send or receive post, or use other means of communication; night-time curfew lifted on 12 February 2019; charged under Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Ulyanovsk

17) Khoren Nikolevich Khachikyan, born 25 April 1985 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 19 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

18) Aleksandr Vyacheslavovich Ganin, born 8 January 1957 – arrested on 15 May 2019 and held in temporary detention for 48 hours; put under specific restrictions on 16 May 2019 – not allowed to go out between 4pm and 9am, to use the telephone or internet, or to speak to anyone else involved in the case; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

19) Natalya Aleksandrovna Mysina, born 17 December 1971 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 19 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

20) Sergei Aleksandrovich Mysin, born 21 June 1965 – arrested on 27 February 2019; detained on 28 February 2019; put under house arrest on 23 April 2019; released on 23 August 2019 and put under specific restrictions; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

21) Andrei Vladimirovich Tabakov, born 23 January 1973 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 24 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

22) Mikhail Grigoryevich Zelensky, born 7 November 1960 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 23 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

- Obligation to present oneself (obyazatelstvo o yavke)

Pskov

1) Gennady Valerianovich Shpakovsky, born 6 October 1958 – arrested on 3 June 2018 but not detained or put under other restrictions; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 July 2018

Kamchatka – Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

2) Sergei Mikhailovich Ledenyov, born 23 July 1974 – arrested 2 December 2018 and put under travel restrictions which lapsed/were lifted on unknown date; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 May 2019

Kirov

3) Anatoly Mikhailovich Tokarev, born 31 December 1958 – questioned 24 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 4 July 2019

Krasnoyarsk – Minusinsk

4) Dmitry Anatolyevich Maslov, born 7 September 1976 – arrested on 19 April 2019 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 20 April 2019 which were lifted on 13 June 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 June 2019

Republic of Khakasiya – Abakan

5) Roman Lyubomirovich Baranovsky, born 27 June 1974 – arrested 10 April 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

6) Valentina Ivanovna Baranovskaya, born 8 April 1951 – arrested 10 April 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region

7) Timofey Viktorovich Zhukov, born 19 May 1979 – arrested on 15 February 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

- No known restrictions

Arkhangelsk – Severodvinsk

1) Sergei Aleksandrovich Potylitsyn, born 21 May 1981 – arrested on 13 March 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

2) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Teterin, born 14 April 1957 – arrested on 13 March 2019; put under travel restrictions the same day, which later lapsed; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

3) Kaleriya Fyodorovna Mamykina, born 18 April 1941 – not arrested; case opened on 7 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 18 July 2019

Belgorod

4) Sergey Aleksandrovich Voykov, born 28 August 1975 – arrested on 7 February 2018 and detained for two days; released under travel restrictions on 10 February 2018, which later lapsed; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

5) Anatoly Aleksandrovich Shalyapin, born 21 January 1994 – arrested on 7 February and detained for two days; released under travel restrictions on 10 February 2018, which later lapsed; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kaluga

6) Eduard Yevgenyevich Petrushin, born 14 November 1966 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 26 June 2019; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Jewish Autonomous Region

7) Konstantin Viktorovich Guzev, born 16 June 1964 – not arrested or detained; case opened on 29 July 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 August 2019

Kamchatka – Vilyuchinsk

8) Yelena Vyacheslavovna Popova, born 10 September 1963 – arrested on 30 July 2018

and detained for 48 hours, extended to 72 hours; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; released from house arrest on appeal on 10 August 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1 and Article 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

9) Mikhail Yuryevich Popov, born 25 May 1962 – arrested on 30 July 2018; detained on 1 August 2018; released on appeal on 9 August 2018; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1 and Article 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

Khabarovsk

10) Nikolai Yuryevich Polevodov, born 10 February 1970 – arrested on 10 November 2018; detained on 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 14 January 2019; released on 2 August 2019; currently on trial under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

11) Yevgeniya Nikolayevna Slobodenyuk, born 24 June 1973 – on wanted list; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1.1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

12) Vitaly Ivanovich Slobodenyuk, born 6 May 1973 – on wanted list; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1.1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Surgut

13) Artur Vasilyevich Severinchik, born 27 October 1968 – arrested on 15 February 2019; detained on 18 February 2019; released on 15 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

14) Ilkhom Aripzhanovich Aminzhanov, born 9 February 1972 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

15) Savely Georgiyevich Gargalyk, born 10 October 1960 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

16) Igor Sergeyeovich Kobotov, born 19 September 1973 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

17) Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Kozak, born 22 April 1994 – arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; whereabouts now unknown – on federal wanted list; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

18) Grigory Yuryevich Ozhiganov, born 23 August 1999 – arrested on 15 February 2019; but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

19) Igor Vladimirovich Petrov, born 24 August 1969 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

20) Pavel Yuryevich Romashov, born 3 July 1974 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

21) Igor Petrovich Trifonov, born 19 October 1969 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

22) Viktor Aleksandrovich Fefilov, born 3 March 1962 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

23) Viola Aleksandrovna Shepel, born 18 July 1976 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

24) Vasily Vasilyevich Burenescu, born 6 September 1958 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

25) Artyom Stanislavovich Kim, born 3 January 1988 – arrested on 15 February 2019 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 15 February 2019 which later lapsed; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

26) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Fedin, born 7 February 1977 – arrested on 15 February 2019; detained on 18 February 2019; released on 11 April 2019 and put under specific restrictions – not allowed to go out at night, communicate with others involved in the case, or use the post, telephone, or internet; restrictions lifted on 4 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 1.1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 3 October 2019

Kirov

27) Aleksandr Petrovich Shamov, born 4 November 1960 – arrested on 26 March 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 April 2019

28) Yevgeny Georgiyevich Udintsev, born 14 March 1949 – arrested on 26 March 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 April 2019

29) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Korobeynikov, born 14 December 1952 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained on 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 1 February 2019; released on 30 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

30) Maksim Valeryevich Khalturin, born 3 September 1974 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained on 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 1 February 2019; released on 30 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

31) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Suvorkov, born 3 February 1978 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 28 March 2019; released on 30 September 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

32) Yury Mikhailovich Geraskov, born 12 January 1956 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 16 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Mordoviya – Saransk

33) Aleksandr Stanislavovich Shevchuk, born 31 August 1989 – arrested on 6 February 2019; detained no later than 8 February 2019; released on 2 July 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 April 2019

Nizhny Novgorod

34) Galina Alekseyevna Abrosimova, born 24 August 1966 – arrested on 17 July 2019 and detained for two days; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

35) Svetlana Sergeyeвна Malyanova, born 11 May 1996 – arrested on 17 July 2019 and detained for two days; charged under Article 282.2 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Novosibirsk

36) Maksim Aleksandrovich Yeremeyev, born 28 September 1987 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 27 June 2019; whereabouts unknown; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2019

37) Vitaly Yuryevich Popov, born 23 February 1967 – arrested on 28 June 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 30 June 2019 which later lapsed/were lifted; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2019
Omsk

38) Dinara Khayrollayevna Dyusekeyeva, born 24 October 1982 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 24 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

39) Gaukhar Magauinovna Bektimirova, born 1 January 1976 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 24 June 2019; charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

40) Amirzhan Zhumatayevich Karimzhanov, born 23 February 1962 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 24 June 2019; has since left Russia; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Perm

41) Boris Ivanovich Burylov, born 8 April 1941 – arrested on 17 September 2018 but released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

42) Yury Vladimirovich Vaag, born 21 August 1975 – arrested on 24 September 2018 but released after questioning; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

43) Aleksandr Valeryevich Inozemtsev, 13 July 1972 – arrested on 24 September 2018 but released after questioning; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

44) Sergei Stepanovich Shvalyov, born 19 February 1977 – unknown if arrested; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to

Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 July 2019

Perm Region – Berezniki

45) Valery Grigoryevich Petrenko, 2 March 1962 – arrested on 26 September 2018 but released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

Perm Region – Ochyor

46) Valery Arkadyevich Rubtsov, 20 January 1972 – arrested on 27 September 2018 but released after questioning; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

Primorye – Spassk-Dalny

47) Sergei Vladimirovich Konyukhov, born 26 July 1983 – possibly arrested on 25 November 2018 but not detained; unknown whether charged or suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

Pskov – Porkhovo

48) Sergei Vasilyevich Komissarov, born 5 October 1966 – arrested on 3 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 3 April 2019 which later lapsed/were lifted; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

49) Aleksei Nikolayevich Khabarov, born 15 February 1975 – arrested on 3 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 3 April 2019 which later lapsed/were lifted; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Rostov-on-Don

50) Galina Vasiliyevna Parkova, born 3 November 1970 – not believed to have been arrested; case opened on 10 June 2019?; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part ?; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 June 2019

Sakhalin

51) Sergei Vladimirovich Kulakov, born 18 April 1961 – arrested on 20 January 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Stavropol – Neftekumsk

52) Aleksei Gennadyevich Shcherbich, born 27 April 1972 – arrested on 9 December 2018 but not detained; unknown whether charged or suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Tatarstan

53) Zinaida Viktorovna Soldatova, born 2 April 1967 – arrested on 27 March 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 12 June 2018 which later lapsed/were lifted; suspect under Article 282.2 Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

54) Valentina Ivanovna Stepkina, born 18 January 1951 – arrested on 27 March 2018 but not detained; thought not to have been placed under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2 Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Volgograd

55) Olga Alekseyevna Medvedyeva, born 3 October 1953 – not arrested or detained but case opened on 16 May 2019; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

56) Valentina Aleksandrovna Makhmadagayeva, born 14 January 1948 – not arrested or detained but case opened on 16 May 2019; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2 Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

- Unknown so far

Krasnoyarsk

1) Tatyana Ferulyova – case opened on 2 October 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1.1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

2) Sergey Tolstonozhenko – case opened on 2 October 2019; suspect under Article 282.2 Part 1.1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Volgograd

3) Denis Petrovich Peresunko, born 11 March 1978 – arrested on 16 May 2019 and detained for 48 hours; unknown whether suspect or charged; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 19 September 2019

- Trials already completed

Oryol

1) Dennis Ole Christensen, Danish citizen, born 18 December 1972 – arrested on 25 May 2017; detained on 26 May 2017; convicted on 6 February 2019 under Article 282.2 Part 1 and will remain in detention until appeal verdict on 23 May 2019; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 March 2018

2) Sergei Vladimirovich Skrynnikov, born 30 October 1962 – arrested 25 May 2017 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 13 March 2018; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 2 and fined 350,000 Roubles; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 March 2018

Khabarovsk

3) Valery Vasilyevich Moskalenko, born 15 April 1967 – arrested on 2 August 2018; detained on 3 August 2018; convicted under Article 282.2, Part 2 on 2 September 2019 and sentenced to two years and two months' assigned labour; because of time in detention he will not serve any of this but will be on probation for six months – appeal pending; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya

4) Arkadya Akopovich Akopyan, born 28 May 1948 – put under travel restrictions on 3 May 2017; convicted under Article 282 Part 1 on 27 December 2018; acquitted on appeal on 1 March 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Perm

5) Aleksandr Vasilyevich Solovyov, born 13 February 1970 – arrested on 22 May 2018; put under house arrest on 24 May 2018; put under specific restrictions on 19 November 2018 – not allowed to use the phone, internet, or postal service, or speak with other parties in the case; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 2 on 4 July 2019 and fined 300,000 Roubles; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 June 2019

Saratov

6) Konstantin Viktorovich Bazhenov, born 10 May 1975 – arrested on 12 June 2018; detained on 14 June 2018; released under specific restrictions on 20 May 2019 – could not go out at night, communicate with anyone else involved in the case, or use the telephone or internet, and must wear electronic tag; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 1 and sentenced to 3 years and 6 months' imprisonment – in detention awaiting appeal; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

7) Aleksey Vladimirovich Budenchuk, born 27 July 1982 – arrested on 12 June 2018; detained on 14 June 2018; ; released under specific restrictions on 20 May 2019 – could not go out at night, communicate with anyone else involved in the case, or use the telephone or internet, and must wear electronic tag; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 1 and sentenced to 3 years and 6 months' imprisonment – in detention awaiting appeal; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Feliks Khasanovich Makhammadiyev, born 14 December 1984 – arrested on 12 June 2018; detained on 14 June 2018; released under specific restrictions on 20 May 2019 – could not go out at night, communicate with anyone else involved in the case, or use the telephone or internet, and must wear electronic tag; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 1 and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment – in detention awaiting appeal; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

9) Gennady Vasilyevich German, born 12 June 1969 – arrested on 12 June 2018 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 14 June 2018; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 1 and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment – in detention awaiting appeal; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Roman Aleksandrovich Gridasov, born 16 September 1978 – arrested on 12 June 2018 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 14 June 2018; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 1 and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment – in detention awaiting appeal; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

11) Aleksey Petrovich Miretsky, born 14 December 1975 – arrested on 12 June 2018 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 14 June 2018; convicted under Article 282.2 Part 1 and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment – in detention awaiting appeal; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Jailings "equate peaceful believers with dangerous criminals"

By Victoria Arnold, Forum 18

The jailing of six Jehovah's Witnesses in Saratov for up to three and a half years "equates peaceful believers with dangerous criminals", Jehovah's Witnesses complain. The Prosecutor's Office did not respond as to why it considered these men dangerous and should be jailed. A Khabarovsk court sentenced another man to assigned labour for discussing Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Forum18 (04.10.2019) - http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2510 - Six men in Saratov have become the first Russian citizens to receive custodial sentences after the Supreme Court's 2017 ban on all Jehovah's Witness activity. Konstantin Bazhenov, Aleksey Budenchuk, Feliks Makhammadiyev, Roman Gridasov, Gennady German, and Aleksey Miretsky were jailed on 19 September for between two and three and a half years in a general-regime labour camp (correctional colony). They intend to appeal.



Aleksey Budenchuk, Konstantin Bazhenov, Feliks Makhammadiyev, Aleksey Miretsky, Roman Gridasov, Gennady German, Saratov

The court "ignored" the fact that that the case materials identified "not a single victim and not a single negative consequence of the alleged extremist activity", Jehovah's Witnesses complained. The verdict "equates peaceful believers with dangerous criminals" (see below).

Neither the Prosecutor's Office nor the Court responded to Forum 18's question as to why they considered these men dangerous and should be jailed (see below).

A court in Khabarovsk in the Far East ordered on 2 September that another man, Valery Moskalenko, should carry out over two years of assigned labour followed by six months' probation, also for allegedly "continuing the activities of a banned extremist organisation" (see below).

The prosecution based its argument on a ten-minute recording of Moskalenko reading and commenting on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount at a Jehovah's Witness gathering. A prosecution "expert" claimed that his preaching contained evidence of "the promotion of exclusivity" and "calls for the continuation of the activities of the banned organisation" (see below).

Moskalenko "was convicted for his faith and the defence will seek acquittal by all legal means, up to an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights", his lawyer Svetlana Gnilkostova told Forum 18 (see below).

The Prosecutor's Office did not respond to Forum 18's question as to why it had sought to jail Moskalenko and whether it intends to appeal (see below).

In Perm on 5 September, Jehovah's Witness Aleksandr Solovyov failed to overturn his conviction and fine of about 11 months' average local wages (see below).

Raids, arrests, trials continue

In 2017, Russia's Supreme Court banned all Jehovah's Witness activity throughout the country with its [decision to declare the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre and all 395 local communities "extremist organisations"](#).

In addition to the September 2019 convictions in Saratov and Khabarovsk, a further 25 Jehovah's Witnesses are currently known to be on trial in eight different locations. In a ninth case, a court in Kostroma sent the case back to prosecutors. Over 200 more people are the subjects of criminal investigation, with many in pre-trial detention or under house arrest (see forthcoming F18News article).

Becoming the subject of a criminal case under the Extremism Law can have far-reaching effects on an individual's life, even before conviction. Investigators may have suspects placed on the Federal Financial Monitoring (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose assets [banks are obliged to freeze](#), with the exception of small transactions of up to 10,000 Roubles.

On 26 July 2019, President Vladimir Putin also signed into law amendments to the Railway Transport Law which bar anyone "in relation to whom there is information about their involvement in extremist activities or terrorism" from driving trains. This will come into force after 180 days.

FSB, police, National Guard, Investigative Committee, and other officials continue to arrest, interrogate, and detain Jehovah's Witnesses for allegedly "organising" or "participating 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" (Criminal Code Article 282.2, Parts 1 and 2), as well as for the alleged "financing of extremist activity" (Criminal Code Article 282.3, Part 1).

"The officers often treat the Witnesses as if they were hardened criminals," Jehovah's Witnesses complained in their report to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw in September 2019.

"Russia is grossly misapplying its own laws to criminally charge the Witnesses with participating in, organising, or financing 'extremist activity'. In reality, the Witnesses are merely peacefully meeting together for worship, reading the Bible or talking to others about their beliefs."

In addition to criminal prosecutions and the associated detentions and harsh treatment by police and other investigators, the report also notes the prohibition of Jehovah's Witness literature (including their [New World version of the Bible](#)), the state confiscation of property, and "at least five cases" of Jehovah's Witness men of military call-up age being denied the right to perform alternative civilian service.

Earlier convictions



Dennis Christensen behind windows in court, 28 January 2019
Human Rights Watch [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 US]

The first Jehovah's Witness in post-Soviet Russia to be imprisoned for exercising his freedom of religion or belief was Danish citizen Dennis Ole Christensen. An Oryol court handed him a [six-year sentence in February 2019](#). He was accused of "continuing the activities" of the local Jehovah's Witness community in Oryol, which was [banned and liquidated in 2016](#), before the Supreme Court ruling.

Another Oryol Jehovah's Witness, Sergey Vladimirovich Skrynnikov, was charged with the same offence and [given a 350,000 Rouble fine in April 2019](#). This represents about 18 months' average wages in Oryol for those in formal work.

The first Jehovah's Witness to be convicted as a result of the 2017 ban was Aleksandr Vasilyevich Solovyov from Perm, who received a fine of 300,000 Rubles in July 2019 (see below).

Muslims also jailed under Extremism Law

Muslims who meet to read the works of late theologian Said Nursi are also subject to prosecution, fines, and jailing under Criminal Code Article 282.2 ("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").

Two are known to be serving jail sentences. A Makhachkala court jailed Artur Abdulgamidovich Kaltuyev for [three years in November 2017](#). A court in Izberbash jailed Ilgar Vagif-ogly Aliyev for [eight years in June 2018](#).

Yevgeny Lvovich Kim, who was released after a year and ten months' imprisonment in April 2019, was deprived of his Russian citizenship and [ordered to be deported to Uzbekistan](#), his country of birth. At present, he remains in a detention centre for foreign nationals in Khabarovsk. It is not known when he will be expelled from Russia, as Uzbekistan is currently refusing to accept him.

Two more prosecutions of Nursi readers are underway – those of [Denis Vladimirovich Zhukov in Krasnoyarsk](#) and [Yevgeny Igoryevich Sukharev in the Krasnoyarsk Region town of Sharypovo](#). It is unknown when they will come to trial.

Saratov: Six Jehovah's Witnesses sentenced to imprisonment

On 19 September 2019, after 12 hearings over nearly three months, Judge Dmitry Larin of Saratov's Lenin District Court found six Jehovah's Witnesses guilty under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("organisation of extremist activity"). He jailed all six for up to three and a half years. They were taken into custody directly from the courtroom.

Judge Larin handed down these sentences:

- 1) Konstantin Viktorovich Bazhenov (born 10 May 1975), three years and six months' imprisonment
- 2) Aleksey Vladimirovich Budenchuk (born 27 July 1982), three years and six months' imprisonment
- 3) Feliks Khasanovich Makhammadiyev (born 14 December 1984), three years' imprisonment
- 4) Roman Aleksandrovich Gridasov (born 16 September 1978), two years' imprisonment
- 5) Gennady Vasilyevich German (born 12 June 1969), two years' imprisonment
- 6) Aleksey Petrovich Miretsky (born 14 December 1975), two years' imprisonment.

The judge also imposed a five-year ban on holding leadership positions in public organisations and one year of restrictions on freedom. According to the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, all six defendants insist that they "have nothing to do with extremism" and are intending to challenge the guilty verdict.

These are the first custodial sentences for Russian citizens under either the Supreme Court's 2017 ruling which outlawed Jehovah's Witness activities nationwide, or the local bans which preceded it, as well as the first conviction under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("organisation of extremist activity") as a result of the 2017 ban.

The court "ignored" the fact that the case materials identified "not a single victim and not a single negative consequence of the alleged extremist activity", the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses commented on its [jw-russia.org](#) news website on 19 September 2019. The charges against the men were based on the assumption that "faith in God is 'continuation of the activities of an extremist organisation'," the Association claimed.

"Instead of searching for and proving the guilt of the defendants, the prosecutor's office was busy 'proving' their confession of a particular religion, while no religion has been banned in Russia," the Association added. "[The verdict] equates peaceful believers with dangerous criminals."

In court, the defendants argued that "collective meetings and religious practices of individuals are not related to the activities of local religious organisations, but are the exercise of their constitutional right to freedom of religion", the [jw-russia.org](#) news website reported on 11 September. They also explained that were they somehow connected with extremism, they "could not be considered followers of Jesus Christ".

In their final statements on 18 September, the defendants expressed their confusion as to why they were accused of "believing in God, reading the Bible, [and] singing spiritual songs and prayers", and insisted that they did no harm to anyone.

Prosecutors had asked for prison terms of seven years each for Bazhenov, Budenchuk, and Makhammadiyev, and six years each for Gridasov, German, and Miretsky.

Bazhenov, Budenchuk, and Makhammadiyev were in detention for 343 days before being released under specific restrictions for the duration of their trial. Under amendments to the Criminal Code signed into law in July 2018, one day in custody is taken as equivalent to a day and half in a correctional colony. Should their sentence enter legal force, it is therefore likely that Bazhenov and Budenchuk will serve about two years and one month, and Makhammadiyev about one year and seven months.

Gridasov, German, and Miretsky spent the time since their initial arrest under travel restrictions. Should the verdict enter legal force, the length of their terms of imprisonment will therefore be unchanged.

Forum 18 wrote to Lenin District Court on 25 September, asking why it had decided that custodial sentences were necessary and in what way the six men could be considered dangerous. Forum 18 had received no reply by the afternoon of the working day in Saratov on 4 October. Forum 18 called Judge Larin's office on 4 October, but the telephone went unanswered.

Forum 18 submitted the same questions to Saratov Regional Prosecutor's Office on 26 September, also asking whether prosecutors were intending to challenge the sentences imposed. Forum 18 had received no reply by the afternoon of the working day in Saratov on 4 October. When Forum 18 called the Prosecutor's Office press service on 4 October, the telephone went unanswered.

Khabarovsk: Jehovah's Witness sentenced to assigned labour



Valery Moskalenko in cage in court, Khabarovsk

Jehovah's Witnesses

After seven hearings across nine weeks and over a year in detention, Jehovah's Witness Valery Vasilyevich Moskalenko (born 15 April 1967) was found guilty under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 on 2 September. He received a sentence of two years and two months of assigned labour (prinuditel'niye raboty) followed by six months of probation.

Judge Ivan Belykh of Khabarovsk's Railway District Court also imposed a ban on Moskalenko leaving the city for this period and a requirement to report to probation authorities once a month. Prosecutors had requested a three-year prison term.

The verdict has not yet entered legal force. Moskalenko denies committing any offence and is challenging his conviction. Khabarovsk Regional Court registered his appeal on 16 September 2019, according to the court website; Judge Natalya Bondareva is due to consider it on 10 October 2019.

"In the actions of Valery Vasilyevich Moskalenko, there was no crime under Article 282.2, Part 1 of the Criminal Code," his lawyer Svetlana Gnilokostova told Forum 18 on 4 October. "He was convicted for his faith and the defence will seek acquittal by all legal means, up to an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights."

Moskalenko was released directly from the courtroom, having spent 396 days in custody in Khabarovsk's Investigation Prison No. 1. Under the July 2018 amendments to the Criminal Code, one day in pre-trial detention is taken as equivalent to two days of assigned labour. Moskalenko was therefore deemed to have served his sentence.

If his appeal is unsuccessful, however, he will still be left with a criminal conviction, and will still have to spend six months on probation.

The judge took account of extenuating circumstances, Moskalenko's lawyer Svetlana Gnilokostova told Forum 18 on 3 October: the defendant's age, the fact he has a heart condition, his role as carer for his ill and elderly mother (with whom he lived prior to his arrest), positive character references, and the lack of a previous criminal record.

Officers [initially arrested Moskalenko on 2 August 2018 during a series of raids on Jehovah's Witness homes in the city.](#) His name does not appear among the founder members of either of the two local Jehovah's Witness communities active in Khabarovsk at the time of the Supreme Court's 2017 ruling, but he was a founder member of the "Oblachnaya" congregation, which was dissolved in 2012 and apparently re-registered under a different name ("Northern") the same year.

The prosecution based its argument on a ten-minute recording of Moskalenko reading and commenting on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount at a Jehovah's Witness gathering in a conference hall on 21 April 2018, according to the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses.

An "expert witness" for the prosecution, psychologist Alyona Payevshchik from the Emergencies Ministry, claimed that his preaching contained evidence of "the promotion of exclusivity" and "calls for the continuation of the activities of the banned organisation".

In his testimony, Moskalenko insisted that his sermon had been peaceful. "In my opinion, this specialist [Payevshchik] is not competent in religious matters," his lawyer Svetlana Gnilokostova told Forum 18. "Giving answers to the investigator's questions, she went beyond psychology and was guided by her personal opinion, which is not legal".

Forum 18 wrote to Khabarovsk Regional Prosecutor's Office before the start of the Khabarovsk working day of 26 September, asking why prosecutors had sought to jail Moskalenko and whether they intended to appeal. Forum 18 had received no reply by the end of the working day in Khabarovsk on 4 October.

Forum 18 also contacted Khabarovsk's Railway District Court to ask why Moskalenko had received a assigned labour sentence and whether prosecutors had lodged an appeal. A spokeswoman for the court responded on 3 October, saying only that the verdict had not yet entered legal force and that Moskalenko's lawyer had lodged an appeal, which the district court had passed on to Khabarovsk Regional Court.

According to Article 53.1 of the Criminal Code and Article 16 of the Criminal Procedural Code, judges impose sentences of assigned labour (prinuditel'niye raboty) instead of imprisonment, if they decide that the former will have a sufficient "correctional" effect on the convicted person but find that a suspended sentence is unsuitable. Assigned labour is used as a punishment only for minor or mid-level offences, or for a first-time serious offence (as in Moskalenko's case).

Where assigned labour is carried out is decided by the prison service – it should be at a correctional centre in the region in which the convicted person lives or was on trial, but people can be sent elsewhere if this is not possible.

Assigned labour may take the form of any job in any organisation, as determined by the correctional centre administering the sentence. According to the Criminal Procedural Code, this takes into account an individual's age, gender, health, ability to work, and occupational speciality, but the assigned work depends on availability and the convicted person has no right to refuse. Officials check on convicted persons' locations at least once a day.

Assigned labour sentences can last anywhere from two months to five years (one to four years under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2; it is not a possible punishment under Part 1). The work is paid, but, if specified in the sentence, deductions of 5 to 20 per cent may be made from wages and paid to the relevant regional body of the prison service.

Should a convicted person abscond or break the rules, the sentence will be replaced by imprisonment for the same duration.

Perm: Appeal unsuccessful

On 5 September, Perm Regional Court upheld the conviction of the first Jehovah's Witness to be found guilty under the Supreme Court's nationwide ban.

On 4 July, Ordzhonikidze District Court fined Aleksandr Vasilyevich Solovyov (born 13 February 1970) [300,000 Roubles under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2](#). This represents about 11 months' average wages in Perm for those in formal work.

38 Jehovah's Witnesses in prison and more to be jailed: 248 criminal cases opened

JW.ORG (23.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2q7YEqK> - Russian authorities are intensifying their attack on Jehovah's Witnesses by conducting a campaign of terror reminiscent of the Soviet era. As of August 19, 2019, there are 38 Witnesses in prison, 24 under house arrest, and 88 who are not allowed to leave their hometown. All have been charged with organizing, participating in, or financing the activity of an "extremist" organization. At least 248 Witnesses are currently under investigation, ranging in age from 20 to 85 years old.

Officials attempt to justify their actions by citing the April 2017 ban on the Witnesses' legal entities and misapplying Article 282 of the Criminal Code. In reality, they are

prosecuting Jehovah's Witnesses for peaceful worship. If convicted, some of those who have been arrested face prison terms of up to ten years.

Since February 2018, law enforcement officers have followed a general pattern when arresting and detaining Jehovah's Witnesses. Heavily armed police forcibly enter Witnesses' homes, often pointing guns at the heads of the residents—including children and the elderly—and forcing them to the floor. While officers search the premises, they confiscate personal belongings and take some Witnesses into custody for further interrogation. Investigators initiate criminal charges against selected Witnesses for alleged extremist activity and petition the courts to order their pretrial detention. Once the Witnesses are jailed, prosecutors petition the courts to extend the pretrial detentions, and the courts typically grant their requests.

On February 15, 2019, a particularly egregious incident took place in the city of Surgut, where law enforcement officers tortured seven male Witnesses after conducting searches of the homes of Witnesses in the area. The victims were stripped naked, suffocated, doused with water, beaten, and shocked with stun guns. The torture occurred on the first floor of the Russian Investigative Committee's office in Surgut. Nineteen Witnesses (including one female) are under investigation for 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization.' Three of the men who were tortured are in pretrial detention.

Dennis Christensen's unjust conviction upheld

After nearly a year-long criminal trial with over 50 court appearances, Dennis Christensen, a 46-year-old Danish citizen, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for practicing his faith as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. On February 6, 2019, Judge Aleksey Rudnev of the Zheleznodorozhniy District Court of Oryol read the verdict convicting Mr. Christensen on the false charge of 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. On May 23, 2019, a three-judge panel of the Oryol Regional Court denied Dennis Christensen's appeal and upheld the six-year prison sentence.

Mr. Christensen was arrested in Oryol on May 25, 2017, when heavily armed police officers and agents of the Federal Security Services disrupted a peaceful weekly religious service of Jehovah's Witnesses that he was attending. He is jailed in Penal Colony No. 3 in the Kursk Region.

Continued efforts to end unjust imprisonments

The marked increase in the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia shows that authorities intend not merely to shut down the legal entities of the Witnesses but to deny them the right to worship. Attorneys for these innocent Witnesses have so far been unsuccessful in ending the unjust imprisonments and have submitted complaints to the UN Human Rights Committee and to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) and have filed applications with the European Court of Human Rights.

In a decision adopted on April 26, 2019, the WGAD denounced Russia's systemic persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in a case involving Mr. Dmitriy Mikhailov from the city of Shuya. He was arrested and charged with "extremism" in the spring of 2018, merely for practicing his faith. The authorities placed him in pretrial detention, where he remained for 171 days. Although he is no longer jailed, Mr. Mikhailov is not allowed to leave his hometown and still faces criminal charges.

The WGAD found that Mr. Mikhailov's arrest and detention violated rights and prohibitions guaranteed by international law—the right to freedom of religion, the right to a fair trial, the prohibition on unlawful detention, and the prohibition on religious

discrimination. In its conclusion, the WGAD directed Russia to discontinue any criminal proceedings against Mr. Mikhailov and accord him just compensation.

In its decision, the WGAD noted: “[T]he actions of Mr. Mikhaylov have always been entirely peaceful, and there is no evidence that he or indeed Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia have ever been violent or incited [sic] others to violence.” The WGAD concluded that his arrest and pretrial detention was based on religious discrimination and acknowledged that his case is “only one of the now 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.”

“[N]umerous other such cases have been raised . . . All these cases concerned the branding of peaceful religious activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses as ‘extremist activities’ which has led to arrest and detention of individuals belonging to this religion. Therefore, although the present opinion concerns the particular circumstances of Mr. Mikhaylov, the Working Group wishes to emphasize that its findings in this opinion apply to all others in situations similar to that of Mr. Mikhaylov.”—UN Human Rights Council, Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its 84th session: No. 11/2019, Russia, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/WGAD/2019 (April 26, 2019), par. 77.

With no ambiguity, the WGAD stressed that its findings apply to all cases involving Jehovah’s Witnesses who have been charged with “extremism.” If Russia will not respect human rights standards, Jehovah’s Witnesses hope that international tribunals will take further action to stem Russia’s attack on their religious freedom.

Six more Jehovah’s Witnesses convicted and sentenced to years in prison

HRWF (19.09.2019) - Six Jehovah's Witnesses from Saratov have been convicted and sentenced to prison for their peaceful Christian worship.

Judge Dmitry Larin of the Leninsky District Court of Saratov sentenced Konstantin Bazhenov and Alexei Budenchuk to 3 years and 6 months in prison; Felix Makhammadiev to 3 years; Roman Gridasov, Gennady German, and Alexei Miretsky to 2 years. Additionally, all of the men have been banned from holding leadership positions in public organizations for a period of 5 years and restriction of freedom for 1 year. All have been charged under Part 1 of Art. 282 of Russian Criminal Code (organization of activities of an extremist organization). The defendants were taken into custody in the courtroom and will be sent to jail. The defense intends to appeal the verdict.

The whole logic of the accusation was based on the speculative thesis that faith in God is “a continuation of the activities of an extremist organization.” As a consequence of this approach, instead of searching and proving the guilt of the defendants, the aim of the investigation was to prove their religious affiliation, despite the fact that no religion is prohibited in Russia. Having proved the religion of the defendants, which they did not hide, the court automatically interpreted this fact as the activity of a prohibited legal entity.

Criminal cases were initiated against all six men as a result of home raids conducted in Saratov on June 12, 2018. Three of the men, Konstantin Bazhenov, Alexey Budenchuk, and Felix Makhammadiev spent almost a year in pretrial detention. All five of the men have families and have been productive members of their community. Alexei Budenchuk has two children who are still in school.

In their final words, the six men quoted from the Bible, thanked the court and law enforcement agencies, and said that they did not harbor animosity toward the persecutors.

Including today's verdict, Russia has now convicted and sentenced to prison seven men.

[Link](#) to images and short biographies for all of the men. You're welcome to use the images, but we ask that you please include the following credit line: "Courtesy of Jehovah's Witnesses."

As of Sept 19

251 JWs were facing criminal charges
41 were in detention (pretrial or prison)
23 were under house arrest
Over 100 were under restrictions

Source: JW headquarters in the US

Moscow's religious persecution in Crimea

Today, at the OSCE/ ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw, the Crimean Human Rights Group stressed that 36 Muslims had been deprived of their freedom on alleged charges of terrorism and extremism although they had never used or advocated violence.

The Crimean Human Rights Group also stressed that three mass searches had been organized in November 2018 among Jehovah's Witnesses and four of them had been accused of extremism.

This summer, a group of Hare Krishna devotees (Hindus) met in the forest in Sevastopol to sing religious songs. This was reported to the Russian police anti-extremism unit. In August, two of them were fined 5,000 rubles for 'unlawful missionary activities'. The 'evidence' was a video posted by Hare Krishna devotees on social media. However, it is clear on the video that there no other people than themselves and were unable to preach to anyone.

HRWF statement at the OSCE/ ODIHR: Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses and other peaceful believers

HRWF (19.09.2019) - In our [Database of Religious Prisoners](#) covering 20 countries around the world, the Russian Federation occupies a special place with 76 prisoners of conscience whose only crime was the peaceful exercise of their religion. Russia is the only country on the European continent where peaceful believers are treated as criminals because they read their Holy Scriptures and religious books in private, because they meet for praying and worshipping at home, because they teach their children in their faith, because they share their beliefs with others.

62 Jehovah's Witnesses, 2 Mormons, 5 Said Nursi followers, 1 Tabligh Jamaat, 1 Sunni in Crimea and 5 Scientologists were behind bars in the first eight months of this year: 76 in all. A few of them were released and put under house arrest but the criminal charges are maintained.

Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen living in Russia, was sentenced to six years in a labour camp on 6 February of this year for his alleged role - denied by Christensen and Jehovah's Witnesses - in leading the local Jehovah's Witness branch in Oryol. His sentence was upheld by an appeal court three months later. He has become the first Jehovah's Witness in post-Soviet Russia to be jailed for exercising the right to freedom of religion and belief.

As of 19 August,

- 248 JWs ranging in age from 20 to 85 years old were facing criminal charges
- 38 were in detention (pretrial or prison)
- 28 were under house arrest
- 88 were not allowed to leave their hometown

Denials by the Government of the Russian Federation in response to concerns raised by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the European Court of Human Rights and the European Union, to the effect that there is no threat to freedom of religion posed by the Supreme Court Ruling banning Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017 lack credibility. Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation are being massively arrested, detained and prosecuted because of their beliefs.

Recommendations

Like all of the main independent Russian human rights organizations, some of which were brutally persecuted by the Soviet Union,

Human Rights Without Frontiers demands that the Russian Federation:

- put an end to the prosecution of Jehovah's Witnesses;
- release from custody all believers of all faiths charged with extremism under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code;
- overturn the Supreme Court ruling banning the 395 Jehovah's Witness congregations.

Human Rights Without Frontiers urges:

all OSCE participating States to raise these points in their bilateral relations with the Russian Federation as long as its persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses persists.

CRIMEA: Violation of the right to freedom of conscience and religion in the occupied Crimea

Statement by Zarema Bariieva, Committee for the protection of rights of the Crimean Tatar people for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019 of the OSCE/ ODIHR

Committee (19.09.2019) - Distinguished moderator, representatives of OSCE member states and participants!

Having occupied Crimea in 2014, in violation of international law, Russia began systemic violations of human rights. Russian repressive practices are gaining more and more momentum. Searches, arrests, detentions are not single episodes any more but systemic and institutionalized. Every day, human rights defenders record dozens of cases of human rights violations throughout Crimea, including violations of freedom of religion. The occupation power is trying to find more and more artificial reasons to arrest completely innocent people, accusing them of crimes that they have never committed. Here are just a few examples registered by the Crimean Tatar Resource Center over the first half of 2019:

- On January 18, on the eve of Friday prayer police officers and riot police arrived at the mosque in Dubki village of Simferopol region. They tried to substitute the imam;
- On March 17, in Sary-su district, Belogorsk, there was an attempt to prevent a prayer service dedicated to illegally convicted political prisoners and the missing during the occupation period of Crimea;
- On March 27, the Russian authorities in occupied Crimea prematurely terminated the lease agreement for the premises, which houses the only Ukrainian Orthodox Church on the peninsula. The "Arbitration Court "of Crimea ordered the church to return the premises to the "Ministry of Property and Land Relations "
- On April 15, in the village Sturmovoje, Balaklava district of Sevastopol, officers of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation searched the house of imam of the local mosque Rustem Abilev, after which he was detained and arrested.

Under the guise of fighting against terrorist organizations and their leaders, the occupation authorities are fighting against dissent and socially active citizens. The so-called Crimean authorities continue conducting regular searches in the households of the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian activists. Most of the searches carried out in the first half of 2019 were related to alleged participation in organizations prohibited in the Russian Federation such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jehovah's Witnesses. The largest number of searches was recorded in March and in June 2019, when security officials massively searched 26 and 8 houses of the Crimean Tatars on suspicion of participating in the Hizb ut-Tahrir organization banned in Russia and 9 houses of representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization.

Since the beginning of the occupation of Crimea, Russia has prosecuted 63 Crimeans for allegedly participating in or organizing the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir, 50 out of 63 have already been illegally transferred to the territory of the Russian Federation. 13 were sentenced to a term of 5 to 17 years in high security prisons. We urge the OSCE member states to do their best and help to return these people from Russian prisons back to their families. We recommend Russian Federation to release all illegally persecuted people in the so-called Hizb ut-Tahrir case.

Thank you very much for your attention!

Zarema Bariieva:zarbariieva@gmail.com

Mosque demolished, church to follow?

Officials repeatedly rebuffed attempts to legalise ownership of the land where Good News Pentecostal Church in Samara has worshipped for two decades. Officials want to demolish the church, at the congregation's expense. A court hearing is due on 25 September. In May, officials bulldozed a mosque built on

farmland near Chernyakhovsk in Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, claiming it violated planning regulations.

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (17.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/36jx4dG> - Officials want to demolish Good News Pentecostal Church in Samara, a city on the Volga River in European Russia, claiming that it does not belong to the congregation. Congregation members, who have worshipped in the church for more than twenty years, would have to pay for the demolition. Officials have repeatedly rejected the congregation's attempts to legalise the church's ownership of the land plot, which was allocated to it in 1997.

The suit brought by Samara's Town Planning Department is due to begin at Samara Regional Arbitration Court on 25 September (see below).

The Church again tried to regularise its situation in 2018. "In the end, instead of registration of the land after almost a year and a half of attempts, we got a lawsuit to demolish our prayer house. Now we are attempting to defend our rights in court," Pastor Yury Ivanov told Forum 18 from Samara. "What a mockery of the feelings of believers" (see below).

Officials at Samara's Town Planning Department failed to respond to Forum 18's written questions asking why they wish to demolish the Church and why it cannot be legalised retroactively (see below).

Meanwhile, in May officials sent bulldozers to demolish a mosque built on private farmland near the town of Chernyakhovsk in Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. Officials claimed the mosque and three other buildings on the site violated planning regulations (see below).

Within days of the mosque leader's application to register a religious organisation in November 2017, prosecutors had ordered an inspection, the inspection took place and officials issued a warning that the buildings should be demolished or legalised (see below).

"As soon as we began to conduct services in the storehouse, the FSB and police began to conduct regular raids and provocations," Artur Rusyayev told Forum 18 (see below).

Officials at Chernyakhovsk administration failed to respond to Forum 18's written questions asking why they demolished the mosque and whether they will allocate land to build a new mosque (see below).

Losing places of worship

Many religious communities across Russia continue to face the loss of their places of worship because of alleged violations of planning regulations. Since municipal authorities are usually unwilling to permit the construction of purpose-built churches and mosques, congregations can be obliged to meet in residential, agricultural, or commercial buildings. This leaves them vulnerable to the complexities and contradictions of the legislation which regulates the use of land.

A key feature of many of these cases is that the congregations in question have often worshipped in their buildings for years, even decades, without any problems – two and half years in the case of the destroyed Muslim prayer house in Kaliningrad Region, for instance, and more than twenty years for the Pentecostals in Samara – before somehow

drawing the adverse attention of the authorities or falling foul of amendments to local planning laws.

In another recent case, officials have barred a Baptist community in Novorossiysk from using its church "for religious purposes", despite the fact that it has worshipped on the same site for two decades.

At the same time, individuals and religious communities are at growing risk of punishment if they exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief by meeting for worship on land not designated for the purpose, such as in homes.

Amid a contradictory and unclear legal framework, officials have increased the numbers of fines for meeting for worship on land designated for residential or commercial use only. One lawyer commented that the situation "is similar to charging a driver [whose] passengers drink tea, with setting up a cafeteria in an illegal place without obtaining the necessary permits and approvals, and violating the land use laws because the road is not designed [for the purpose]". The numbers of such fines have been increasing sharply from 2016.

Particularly in rural areas, some religious communities meet in homes. They often either do not need or cannot afford a dedicated place of worship, or cannot get the land use designation changed from residential to religious use.

The so-called "anti-missionary" amendment, introduced as part of the Yarovaya package of "anti-terrorism" laws in 2016, has had a chilling effect on religious practice in public and even private space, thanks to its broad definition of "missionary activity" and its ban on performing it on residential premises. Many prosecutions under the associated Administrative Code Article 5.26, Parts 4 and 5 have arisen from law enforcement's discovery of collective worship being held outside formal places of worship.

Samara: Pentecostal church to be demolished?

Good News Pentecostal Church in the Samara suburb of Mekhzavod, where Pentecostal Christians have worshipped for more than twenty years, may be demolished if the community loses a lawsuit brought against it by the city's Town Planning Department.

The suit's first full hearing is due at Samara Regional Arbitration Court on 25 September. It is difficult to predict the outcome, Pastor Yury Ivanov told Forum 18 from Samara on 16 September, but if successful, the suit would oblige the Pentecostal community to pull down their church at their own expense. "What a mockery of the feelings of believers," Pastor Ivanov added.

The church was built as a temporary worship space in the 1990s, when local government was "constantly changing" and permanent construction was difficult, according to Pastor Ivanov. The building was never formally entered in the cadastral register as the property of the Pentecostal congregation.

The community has tried several times over the years to legalise the situation, only to be passed "from office to office" with no success, Pastor Ivanov told Forum 18. Their most recent application, in 2018, led to a series of inspections and fines by Rosreestr and the city administration, and the Town Planning Department lodging its suit at the arbitration court, asking that the building be declared not to be the community's property.

Asked why he thought the Samara administration wanted to get rid of his church, Pastor Ivanov said only that the authorities "have a different attitude towards the non-Orthodox sector".

On 13 September, Forum 18 wrote separately to Samara's Town Planning Department and to the heads of the Department's legal administration and its offices for the formation and allocation of land plots, and asked: why the Department thinks the church should be demolished; whether it cannot be legalised retroactively; why the Department is seeking to demolish the building now, when it has stood since 1997; and whether the city administration will provide an alternative plot for construction of a new church, should the old one be destroyed. Forum 18 had received no reply by the end of the working day in Samara on 16 September.

Samara: "Sent from office to office"

Good News Church, a single-story building with a cross on its gable wall, stands in a fenced plot on a major road in northern Samara. Its community was founded in 1992 and initially met in temporary locations on the city's outskirts, Pastor Ivanov told Forum 18. The city administration first granted it a land plot in 1996, but soon gave it instead to the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Pentecostals received another plot just 500m (550 yards) away. In 1997, the administration issued (under the legislation of the time) a two-year planning permit, which allowed for the installation of communications and utilities and the planning of the territory, followed by a building permit in 1999.

"But as a rule," explained Pastor Ivanov, "people began to build everything already at the planning stage. Therefore, in our case, we intended to build and use a temporary prayer house until the main one was constructed. But this was not easy, and a decision was made to reconstruct this temporary building in order to strengthen it and use it as a permanent church."

At this point, therefore, the community had a building and a land plot which were not registered as its property (the original land contract expired in 1999). It tried to formalise its ownership of both, without success. In 1999, the community's pastor emigrated to the United States, and "confusion began", according to Pastor Ivanov.

"The documentation was first in one hand, then in another," and local government was "constantly changing". "Then again", he added, "reminding the authorities of our problems was never safe, since they never had any intention of registering (ofornlyat) the land plot".

"Officials simply sent us from office to office, but we ourselves were afraid to spread the information that the land was not registered to us, because there could also be other people who wanted it," Pastor Ivanov added. "So we became hostages of circumstances when, it seems, that they allocated the land, but did not register it." He said this has also happened in many similar cases with other land of no religious significance.

In 2018, the Pentecostals tried again to legalise their property situation, consulting officials, ordering a land survey, and submitting documents to the Town Planning Department, but received only a form response.

This attempt to comply with the law seems to have triggered the round of legal action the church is currently facing. Legal action has included multiple inspections by Rosreestr which resulted in a fine of 100,000 Roubles under Administrative Code Article 7.1 ("unauthorised occupation of a land plot"), and a fine of 15,556 Roubles from the Samara Administration's Department of Property Relations for "unjust enrichment" from their use of the land.

The total fines represent the equivalent of about three months' average local wage for an individual in formal work.

"We have continued to try to formalise our ownership of [the land plot] in spite of this," Pastor Ivanov told Forum 18. "In the end, instead of registration of the land after almost a year and a half of attempts, we got a lawsuit to demolish our prayer house. Now we are attempting to defend our rights in court."

Ivanov lodged an appeal against the Administrative Code Article 7.1 fine on 30 August 2019 at Samara's Krasnoglinsky District Court. The Court has not yet set a date for when this will be considered.

Kaliningrad Region: Still no purpose-built mosque

Nearly six years after the authorities halted the construction of their cathedral mosque in December 2013, Muslims in Russia's western exclave of Kaliningrad still have no purpose-built place of worship of sufficient size in the entire Region.

No other plot of land has been granted in the city of Kaliningrad (where most of the Muslim population lives). In May 2019, bailiffs demolished a prayer house near the town of Chernyakhovsk after the municipal administration decided that it violated planning regulations.

"Discrimination against Muslims has acquired a systemic, consistent character in this region", lawyer Dagir Khasavov commented to Forum 18 on 19 August. "It has been elevated to the level of regional policy."

Khasavov also believes that the May 2019 demolition of the prayer house in Chernyakhovsk District (see below) had an ethnic dimension, that officials wish "to give a lesson to [ethnic] Russians who convert to Islam, like Artur (Abdurahman), that the authorities would not tolerate this".

Khasavov has now added the May 2019 demolition of the prayer house in Chernyakhovsk District to the appeal he lodged with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg in November 2014 on behalf of the Religious Organisation of Muslims of Kaliningrad (Application No. 75301/14). He intends to request that the ECtHR give the case priority treatment.

In December 2013, a court halted the construction of Kaliningrad city's first mosque when it was more than 60 per cent complete. The Muslim community has been seeking to build a mosque since 1993 and city authorities have allocated and taken away eight different sites.

Prosecutors argued that the building encroached on the preservation zone around a cultural heritage site, despite the fact that the cited regional heritage protection law was not in force when work began. In April 2014, the municipal decrees which had permitted construction were ruled invalid and the Muslim community was deprived of its right of ownership of the unfinished mosque. Kaliningrad Regional Court rejected an appeal in June 2014.

On 6 December 2017, Kaliningrad's Central District Court ruled that the Muslim community should be paid 66.3 million Roubles in compensation for the costs of cadastral registration, surveying, site preparation, supplies, and the employment of contractors.

As lawyer Khasavov points out, however, in his submission of additional materials to the ECtHR on 30 August 2019, this decision "neither directly nor indirectly states that the

authorities violated the [Muslim community's] rights to a fair trial, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, [and] respect for property, and also allowed discrimination. This decision is drawn up in such a way that it does not recognise the existence of a violation of any rights of the [Muslim community]. It mentions only the need to compensate for losses (construction costs)."

Khasavov also notes that more than 22 million Roubles of the compensation remains unpaid as of the end of August 2019.

Also in December 2017, the city administration gave the Religious Organisation of Muslims of Kaliningrad free use of a disused workshop near the unfinished mosque, where prayers are now held.

"We disassembled and carried away the machines, made repairs, changed the windows, put in heating, installed speakers," Imam Irshat Khisamov told the kavpolit.com news website on 26 March 2018. The building can accommodate only 120 worshippers, while about a thousand attend Friday prayers. The rest must pray on wooden pallets in the yard, whatever the weather. "Instead of a spiritual lift and positive emotions, they get illnesses."

Khisamov added that, due to the lack of space, community leaders have asked women to stay home on Fridays (the community follows the practice of gender segregation during worship), "although there are many who want to come to the mosque".

In 2015, the city administration offered a site on Kaliningrad's ring road to a different Muslim organisation, Ikhsan, giving it a year to produce development plans. Ikhsan has sought two extensions to the deadline, and now has until 1 December 2019 to submit the necessary documentation.

According to local media, this plot had previously been offered to and rejected as unsuitable by the Religious Organisation of Muslims of Kaliningrad. According to the cadastral register, the land in question still belongs to the Defence Ministry. It is unclear when or if mosque construction might begin there.

Ikhsan was registered to a residential address in Kaliningrad city on 22 April 2015, but is actually based in the village of Bolshoye Isakovo, which lies on the eastern outskirts of Kaliningrad but is formally in the Guryevsk District. Ikhsan is part of the Kaliningrad Regional Muslim Public Organisation "INAM", which in turn is part of the Moscow-based Spiritual Administration of Muslims/Council of Muftis, headed by Ravil Gainutdin.

The Religious Organisation of Muslims of Kaliningrad, on the other hand, is affiliated to the rival Ufa-based Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia, led by Talgat Tadzhutdinov. Ikhsan already has its own mosque in Bolshoye Isakovo, which was converted from a private house and opened in February 2010.

Chernyakhovsk: Prayer house demolished

Aware of the lack of space for worship, Muslim converts Artur Rusyayev and Irina Rusyayeva offered the Religious Organisation of Muslims of Kaliningrad a building for use as a prayer house. The building was on farmland they owned just south of the town of Chernyakhovsk, about 90km (55 miles) east of Kaliningrad. About 20 people would meet there regularly for Friday prayers and on Islamic holidays.

"As soon as we began to conduct services in the storehouse, the FSB and police began to conduct regular raids and provocations," Artur Rusyayev told Forum 18 on 11 September 2019. Chernyakhovsk's municipal administration decided that the building (and three

others on the site) violated planning regulations. In September 2018, Chernyakhovsk City Court ordered that they be demolished.

On 22 May 2019, bulldozers tore down all four buildings. The demolition contractors, accompanied by bailiffs, armed law enforcement officers, and the head of the Chernyakhovsk administration, arrived two days before they had been expected, leaving Artur Rusyayev to run inside to rescue the Koran as a bulldozer approached.

Irshat Khisamov, head of the Religious Organisation of Muslims of Kaliningrad, called the demolition "barbarity" in comments to the New Kaliningrad news website.

Three days after the demolition, Rusyayev put up a banner at the site reading "This is what the authorities did to my family for accepting Islam".

Forum 18 wrote to the Chernyakhovsk administration on 25 August to ask why demolition had been deemed necessary, why such measures had been taken now when the building had stood on the site for several years, and whether the administration would allocate a land plot in a different location for the legal construction of a mosque. Forum 18 had received no reply by the end of the working day in Kaliningrad on 16 September.

Services were held in the makeshift prayer house for two and half years before the demolition, Rusyayev explained to Forum 18. "In Kaliningrad Region, even if you have all the [necessary] permissions, it is impossible to be sure that, under one pretext or another, they won't cancel their own permits."

As well as being taken to court over land law violations, Rusyayev was also charged on 15 March 2019 with "unlawful missionary activity" under Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 ("Russians conducting missionary activity").

Chernyakhovsk District Magistrate's Court No. 2 acquitted him on 11 June 2019 because the police report issued to Rusyayev differed from the one submitted to court (the location of the alleged offence was omitted on Rusyayev's copy, leading the judge to conclude that the copy in the case materials had been unlawfully "corrected" in the defendant's absence).

Chernyakhovsk: Demolition warning days after registration application

The Rusyayevs bought four plots between May 2012 and May 2014, intending to use them for farming, and by the summer of 2015 had constructed four buildings, which they say were "auxiliary structures" for agricultural activities (Rusyayev registered his farming enterprise in July 2016, according to federal tax records). They began inviting fellow Muslims to pray on the site at the end of 2016.

The Chernyakhovsk administration insists that these buildings were not "auxiliary", as the Rusyayevs claim, but "capital construction" (ie. permanent and substantial), for which a building permit must be sought, which the Rusyayevs did not do, and which in any case is not allowed in the land use zone in which the four plots lie ("agricultural land use within the boundaries of a settlement").

In court verdicts seen by Forum 18, the storehouse used for prayer is described as being carpeted, plastered, double glazed, and wired for electricity. The administration insisted that no evidence of agricultural activity was found during inspections, and argued that there was no main building to which the others could be "auxiliary".

Rusyayev claimed to New Kaliningrad news website on 27 May 2019 that the authorities showed no interest in the buildings on his and his wife's land before it became known that Muslims were using one of them as a worship space. He said he attempted to register a local religious organisation (Makhalla Irshad) using an address in Chernyakhovsk on 17 November 2017.

According to court documents, seen by Forum 18, prosecutors asked the Chernyakhovsk administration to carry out an inspection of the Rusyayevs' land plots on 20 November 2017, which the administration did on 22 November 2017. It then issued a warning on 24 November 2017 that the buildings were illegal and should be demolished or legalised.

When the Rusyayevs did not comply, the administration initiated a lawsuit to have the buildings declared "unauthorised structures", which Chernyakhovsk City Court upheld on 10 September 2018. The Rusyayevs unsuccessfully challenged the outcome in Kaliningrad Regional Court on 28 November 2018 and again on 21 February 2019. They then turned to the Supreme Court in Moscow, where their appeal was rejected without consideration on 15 April 2019 and again refused on 3 June 2019, after the buildings had already been demolished.

After Chernyakhovsk City Court upheld the administration's suit, Rusyayev wrote to the city administration asking that land for a new mosque be formally allocated. In his response of 12 November 2018, seen by Forum 18, administration head Sergei Bulychyov said that, according to the city's General Plan and the Rules for Land Use and Construction, the provision of prayer houses was "not foreseen". He added that "the opinion of the majority of citizens" would have to be sought before the building of any "non-Christian temples".

In comments to New Kaliningrad news website on 27 May 2019, Bulychyov explained the authorities' attention to the Rusyayevs' land in terms of Artur Rusyayev's "too active actions" (his earlier request to allow Muslim burials in a local cemetery, then to have a separate Muslim cemetery, "and so on"). This "led us to conclude that we should analyse the whole situation".

From an examination of all available court documents, the cadastral register, and planning documents and maps of the Svobodnenskoye Rural Settlement (within which the land plots lie), it appears that the Rusyayevs built on their land believing that its categorisation permitted certain construction, and later, believed they had the right to permit meetings for worship on their property under Article 16, Part 2 of the Religion Law. This states that "worship services [and] other religious rites and ceremonies" may be held unhindered on residential premises.

According to the cadastral register, three plots (including the one with the prayer house) were designated as being for "personal subsidiary cultivation/private farming/household plots" (lichnoye podsobnoye khozyaystvo), and one for gardening. The former category, according to the official classification of land uses in Russia, permits the construction of a residential house, a garage, and other auxiliary buildings, as well as agricultural activities.

According to the appeal verdict of 28 November 2018, Svobodnenskoye Rural Settlement confirmed this categorisation on 18 July 2014, but this directly contradicted the zoning regulations introduced by the Rules of Land Use and Construction and the General Plan for Svobodnenskoye on 31 January 2014. The appeal court therefore considered this an invalid argument.

According to these Rules, the Rusyayevs' plots lie within a "zone of agricultural land use within the boundaries of a settlement", where the only permitted uses are gardening,

beekeeping, and pastoral farming, and no building is allowed apart from those used for animals and the production and storage of agricultural products.

Chernyakhovsk: Officials' "very close attention" to religious organisations

After the administration lodged their suit at the city court on 24 April 2018, the Rusyayevs attempted to bring their property and the Muslim community's use of it into line with the law. They formally registered their ownership of three of the buildings on 27 April 2018 and had them entered in the cadastral register as "auxiliary structures", based on the conclusions of a cadastral engineer.

On 23 May 2018, a formal agreement of free use was signed by the Religious Organisation of Kaliningrad and Irina Rusyayeva (who owns the plot on which the prayer house stood).

Dismissing the Rusyayevs' claim that the buildings were there to serve and improve the land plots and were therefore "auxiliary", the court ruled that they should be removed from the cadastral register and declared "unauthorised structures", subject to demolition at the Rusyayevs' own expense. The Rusyayevs' right of ownership was annulled.

In arguing that the buildings were not "auxiliary", the administration pointed out in court that the storehouse used for worship was not used for any agricultural purpose. Judge Natalya Kovalchuk agreed that the Religion Law allowed that "Religious services, [and] other religious rites and ceremonies may be freely performed in religious buildings and structures and in the territories belonging to them, [and] in other places [mestakh] provided to religious organisations for these purposes", but concluded that "the non-residential premises built by Rusyayev, which he presents as auxiliary, cannot be used only for religious ceremonies, since they have a different purpose, and are not being used for peasant farming. Moreover, they cannot be transferred to use by third parties."

In comments to the New Kaliningrad news website on 27 May 2019, Kaliningrad lawyer Stanislav Solntsev pointed out the "obviously unpromising route" the Rusyayevs took to attempt to legalise their property. Firstly, construction was in fact barred by the Land Use and Development Plan, and secondly, "even if we assume that the original goal was still the construction of auxiliary buildings for agricultural activities .. then the chance to register buildings as auxiliary, if there is no main building, tends to zero".

That the prosecutor's office requested an inspection just three days after Rusyayev's appointment as chair of Makhalla Irshad "testifies to the very close attention of law enforcement agencies to religious organisations. On the one hand, we can only rejoice that the prosecutor's office is responding so quickly, and on the other, we are aware that such attention is clearly connected with religious activity, while there are many situations where the prosecutor's office should conduct inspections and intervene more actively in compliance with the rule of law".

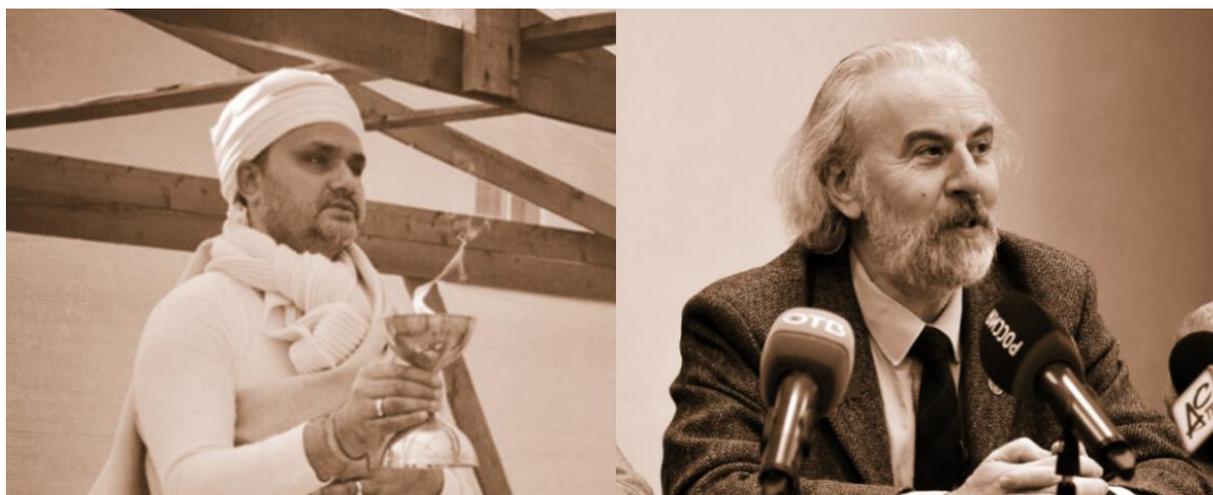
The Rusyayevs are now liable for the 194,000-Rouble cost of the demolition. This is equivalent to about eight months' average local wage for an individual in formal work.

They have lodged a lawsuit against the bailiffs' service at Chernyakhovsk City Court, asking that both the demolition and the demand for payment be ruled unlawful. The first hearing took place on 5 September, with the next due on 26 September.

"We have also filed a complaint with the regional investigative committee against [administration head] Sergei Bulychyov for prejudice against people who profess Islam and for inciting religious hatred by demolishing the mosque and creating all kinds of obstacles to the allocation of land for an Islamic cemetery".

In Russia, a Hindu guru alleges smear campaign by Orthodox Christian activist

Since 2016, prominent Hindu religious leader Shri Prakash Ji and his family claim to have been caught in a web of harassment perpetuated by an 'anti-cult activist' empowered by the Russian Orthodox Church and government.



Shri Prakash Ji and Alexander Dvorkin.

By Aleesha Matharu

The Wire (17.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2kJ1lQn> - Four years ago is when prominent Hindu religious leader [Shri Prakash Ji](#) and Orthodox Christian 'anti-cult' activist Alexander Dvorkin locked horns for the first time. Since then, allegations and counter allegations have flown thick and fast in a tale with political and religious roots that span half of Europe and other parts of the world.

The year 2016, according to Prakash and his family, marked the beginning of a systematic smear campaign at the hands of Professor Dvorkin, who, as a deep dive on the internet revealed, has had a history of playing the aggressor against minority religions and sects.

In Russia, under the rule of President Vladimir Putin over the past two decades, [Orthodox Christianity has become somewhat synonymous with Russian nationalism](#), allowing religious activists and groups like [Christian State-Holy Rus](#) to have their moment in the sun. In fact, Putin's critics have time and again accused him of helping nurture a sense of impunity among nationalist and militant religious activists over the years.

Towards that end, the Prakashs say, Dvorkin has been one of the leading champions in the systematic persecution of religious minorities.

Dvorkin was also the face behind the campaign to [ban the Bhagwad Gita in Russia](#) in 2012 when he was the head of the Expert Council for State Religious Expertise under the Russian justice ministry. He had then called the Hare Krishna movement, which was legalised in Russia in 1988, a "totalitarian sect" that had no ties with mainstream Hinduism.

Prakash's son, 25-year-old Prasun Prakash, told The Wire, "We have faced all sorts of horrible things, including constant threats to our life and unauthorised police raids."

"His [Dvorkin's] task is to defame any popular spiritual or religious figure in Russia so that the reign of the Orthodox Christian church stays strong on the Russian people. My father, on the contrary, teaches that humanity is above all religions and that people shouldn't discriminate on the basis of faith," Prasun said.

Dvorkin, who spoke to The Wire on the phone from Moscow, called the allegations baseless. Instead, he said that it is the Prakashs who have been going hammer and tongs at him.

"I am sick and tired of the atrocious, immoral, and pathetic smear campaign that Mr Prakash his family and his adepts have been conducting against me for the last four years," said Dvorkin, who is a professor of Church History and Cultic Studies at Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University, Moscow, as well as the the head of the Russian member-organisation of the French government-funded organisation European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism, better known as FECRIS.

"I think Prakash is the shame of Hindus, I don't know what kind of teacher he is... he has no parampara. As far as I know, Prakash is not a guru. He is a failed medical student and a con artist who founded his own cult. Just because he is from India doesn't make him a teacher of Hinduism," Dvorkin told The Wire.

'Enemies by default'

"Despite masking as a follower of orthodox Christianity, all of Dvorkin's actions reveal a person holding extremist views and hatred towards other religions," 48-year-old Prakash told The Wire. Prakash moved to Russia in 1990 [from Patna](#), Bihar when he was 19.

As may be seen in a profile run by Prazdnik InfoTV from 2016, his followers are locals and he conducts his discourses in Russian.

"Russia is my second home and I have never had any negative experiences with any governmental organs of the country, something that Dvorkin has tried to change," the guru said.

Shri Prakash Dham, the spiritual centre that has been at the centre of this battle, lies almost 30 km outside the Russian capital of Moscow, the city where Prasun and his two siblings were born. Prasun is presently the director of public affairs at the Centre for Conservation of Indian Culture, Shri Prakash Dham.

Shri Prakash Dham centres can be found in several countries, including Germany, the UK, Ukraine, Lithuania, Kazakhstan and [India](#).

The harassment Prakash has faced has been documented by several international media organisations and rights groups, including in a [Newsweek report](#) published in mid-2018, where the religious leader had said: "They searched the centre, and they searched my home, where my family was. They are sending fake journalists to my office. People come to me, they pretend to be a follower, and then they film me. Every week they are doing something."

"I'm starting to wonder how I can live here with my family. There are so many nationalist elements here, and my daughter is going to school, every day we are worried. They call and threaten us, they say I should leave Russia," he told Newsweek.

When Prasun and his family went to the police station, they say they were “physically pushed out” by a policeman who, according to Prasun, said: “Russia is an Orthodox Christian country and foreign elements should be removed.” A [recording of the incident](#) was posted on Prakash’s Facebook page.

[According to Russian news channel Life News](#), the raids were executed on the suspicion of extremist activities from Prakash’s compound because of complaints they had received from Russian Orthodox activists.

The spark

Dvorkin and Prakash’s first brush happened when the latter complained about an online forum – <https://forum.iriney.ru/> – run by Dvorkin where users had alleged that Prakash was a thief who “hypnotises people” through meditation only to steal their money.

“I didn’t know about [Prakash] until four years ago when his former followers began writing on the forum connected to our website and saying they had experienced abuse in his cult,” Dvorkin said.

According to the professor, “We have an internet forum which is informative. Four years ago, a discussion page was formed by former followers of Prakash. Some of them were disappointed, felt they had been abused and exploited by him. So they started writing on the forum to express their opinion. The forum is open to everybody – anyone can write as long as they don’t write extremist things or something that could incite violence.”

“Suddenly, Prakash sued me in court for something other people wrote, people who had felt exploited... some people even wrote they had been sexually abused. Instead of giving them answers, he sued me,” he added. “That’s how I learnt about him [Prakash].”

When the Prakashs sued, “journalists wrote articles that weren’t favourable to the ashram,” Dvorkin said.

“For some reason, Prakash felt that all these journalists were my employees, and presented it in a twisted form. Once a young girl from one TV studio went to the ashram... She was not allowed in. He presented it as a group of tough guys who supposedly came with violent intentions, though even the video aired on TV shows one petite young woman surrounded by Prakash’s bodyguards,” he said.

“It was then that Prakash decided my hand was behind everything happening to him. And it even goes out of proportion. Recently one of his followers said that I am the sole reason that the trade between Russia and India dropped by 25% last year.”

With regard to the accusation of using state machinery to harass the ashram, he said the police had questions for them as “he [Prakash] is suspected in very serious economic crimes”.

“But I am not an economist nor a criminal investigator. I cannot discover or investigate economic crimes. To blame me for his trouble with Russian law is as absurd as to believe that I can influence Russian-Indian trade relations,” Dvorkin said.

“He has a lot of money and a lot of very expensive property and the police wants to know where it comes from. With this money, he buys everyone to write ugly articles about me, organise groups in India to rally against me and spread misinformation about me,” Dvorkin said.

When speaking to Newsweek, Dvorkin had also blamed scientologists and Jehovah's Witnesses for running a defamation campaign against him. "They've also said that I am a CIA agent and Mossad agent and KGB agent. But I'm the head of an NGO, professor at the Orthodox University," he told [Newsweek](#).

Appeal upon appeal

Prasun told The Wire that they have made several appeals to Putin and to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene against Dvorkin on his family's behalf. A petition on [Change.org](#), started by Prasun and which can be found on Prakash's website, appeals to Putin, Modi, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and Indian external affairs minister S. Jaishankar to help bring an end to the harassment.

"We sincerely believe that Mr. Dvorkin, in his quest for cheap publicity, has identified my father and our family to be used as the one tool against Hindus in Russia to achieve the ultimate subjugation of the whole Hindu community in this country as per his illegal and deplorable intentions," it says.

"We had sued Mr. Dvorkin's website [forum.iriney.ru](#) for libel. Our first lawyer got pressurised by the hooligans of Mr. Dvorkin and couldn't continue the fight against injustice happening to me and my family. Our second lawyer, Mr. Kaloy Akhilgov took the judicial reigns in the end of 2017. We won the case," it adds.

Dvorkin was not present in court for the verdict on December 10, 2018. "We also won the distinction of being the first to ever come out on top in a case against Dvorkin," Prasun said.

The [Odintsovo court's decision](#), which favoured Prakash, was hailed as "unique" and "historic". But, according to the Prasun, it became one of the main reasons for Dvorkin's supporters to kickstart the hate campaign.

РЕШИЛ:

Заявление Кумар Пракаш- удовлетворить.
Признать сведения, содержащиеся в статьях (<http://forum.iriney.ru/topic/316-moshennik-lzhedukhovnyj-uchitel-shri-prakash-lzhi-i/>) «Мошенник!? ЛЖЕ духовный учитель Шри Пракаш Джи. Истина Любовь Красота» и аналогичную статью <https://newirkutsk.ru/news/strana/lzhе-guru-kumar-prakash-istoriya-odnogo-moshennika/> порочащими честь, достоинство и деловую репутацию Кумар Пракаш, не соответствующими действительности.

Решение может быть обжаловано в Московский областной суд через Одинцовский городской суд в течение месяца со дня принятия решения суда в окончательной форме.

Федеральный судья

ПОДПИСЬ

КОПИЯ

Судья
Секретарь

Л.Н. Захарова

Мотивированное решение изготовлено 12 декабря 2018 года

A copy of the court verdict which orders Dvorkin to remove defamatory content.

When the petition was first released in 2017, protestors in Delhi [reportedly](#) burnt an effigy of Dvorkin outside the Russian embassy, and labelled him an enemy of India.

In 2017 too, General V.K. Singh, then India's minister of state for foreign affairs, had [given his word to the family](#) that the Indian government would throw its weight behind them and work with the Putin administration to bring an end to their ordeal.

"I had written hundreds of letters to the PMO and MEA but strong action hasn't been taken by them till date," Prasun told The Wire.

So far, no real support has been offered.

"Bureaucracy does not really care about the state of minorities, be it Russia or India. They care only about personal PR points," Prasun said.

Instead, Prasun says that they've had a lot of support from the Muslim community in Russia, as well as from the Communist Party.

[On a recent radio show](#), Akhilgov, the family's lawyer who is a prominent Muslim figure in the country, said: "Dvorkin attacks not only Hinduism but also talks rubbish about Islam. He mentioned in one of his lectures that Islam is the product of Prophet Muhammad's fantasies."

In response, Dvorkin said, "In his Russian publications Prakash calls himself the leader of Hindus in Russia. No less. But even after 30 years in Russia, he still speaks broken Russian, which does not help him understand what is really happening between the Russian authorities and him.

"Basically, Dvorkin's strategy is to systematically destroy religious minorities – he also attacks Islam, which my Muslim friends can attest to – through the use of defamation tactics using the internet, TV, radio and newspapers, using his connections in the Russian government (officials who tend to be hardcore Christian nationalists), and by threatening and attacking members of religious groups and so on," Prasun told The Wire.

"He works for an ideology... we are his enemies by default," Prasun said.

Prakash and Prasun also presented their case at a conference in Geneva at the United Nations in 2018.

A United States Commission on International Religious Freedom also took note of the plight of the Russian Hindu spiritual leader in 2018:

"In November 2017, police raided a Moscow-area Hindu spiritual centre and the home of its religious leader, Shri Prakash Ji. Although no charges were filed, Ji and his centre appear to have been targeted following accusations made against them by Russian 'anti-cult' activist Aleksander Dvorkin. Dvorkin is one of a large network of radical Russian Orthodox activists who have grown considerably in influence over the last 10 years due to the Russian government's increasing patronage of the Russian Orthodox Church and the government's Soviet-era paranoia about the subversive potential of independent religious groups."

[In a 2012 interview to website Ortho Christian](#), where the professor is a contributor himself, Dvorkin had said that the "communal Bharatiya Janata Party", which is based on "religious nationalism" was the first to exploit the idea of 'guru on export'."

"Communalists understood that gurus who go to Western countries and their newly converted adepts play rather important political role, can be agents of influence, and bring real income. As all these gurus then come back to India, many Western people who

fell in their nets come after them to see them, to live beside them and certainly bring their money with them," he [said](#).

'Anti-cult activism'

Dvorkin, besides being the head of the Russian branch of FECRIS, and a professor of Church History, is also the president of the Saint Irenaeus of Lyons Centre for Religious Studies, a missionary faculty department of the university – an NGO, as Dvorkin put it – as well as a member of various boards of anti-cult organisations, including the Open Minds Foundation, for which part of the [mission statement](#) reads:

"Teach people how to protect themselves from being unduly influenced by and falling prey to predators, and coercive groups...creating programs to help people recover from institutionalised undue influence."

But FECRIS, the Europe-wide counter-cult agency, is big brother to various smaller organisations in the continent. The fact that it is publicly funded by the French government raises several questions.

Thierry Valle, the president of CAP Freedom of Conscience, a French NGO that has been dedicated to freedom of religion and belief for 20 years, told The Wire: "Since its creation in 1994, FECRIS has been financed by the French government, despite it being a secular state. In 2018, the financing of the French state represented more than 92% of the budget of FECRIS."

[A 2012 case study by Human Rights Without Frontiers](#) (HRWF) says the funding from France "places in doubt the French government's neutrality regarding religious freedom".

[At a conference in Geneva in January 2018](#), several experts also argued for France to stop funding FECRIS, urging the country "cease sponsoring such gross violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

One of the speakers, Eric Roux, of the European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom (EIFRF), said, "When a country like France adopts a specific but controversial policy, other countries may think it is legitimate to follow suit and then they do worse. By financing groups like FECRIS, France sends the message to the rest of the world: 'You can discriminate and persecute religious minorities because that is what we, the cradle of human rights, do'."

[FECRIS' aim](#) "according to its bylaws", is to "identify as a sect/cult or a guru the organisation or the individual which misuses beliefs and behavioural techniques for his own benefit".

FECRIS also obtained consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN [in 2009](#), and thus has access to the UN in New York, Geneva and Vienna. It organises several conferences every year in various countries, you can read an account of the content of one such event held in Paris in May 2019 [here](#).

The plight of Russia's Jehovah's Witnesses

FECRIS aided the Russian Orthodox Church and the government to successfully outlaw the religion of the Jehovah's Witnesses and drive their institutions from Russia. Dvorkin himself played a key role: [a leaked WikiLeaks cable talks of how](#) Dvorkin had "initiated a campaign to discredit Jehovah's Witness members in the public eye" and had "appeared on TV and accused Jehovah's Witnesses of committing macabre crimes".

In 2017, Russia had labelled Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist" group and begun a long campaign of persecution that still persists today. As a result, over 175,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were left at the mercy of mass raid, forcing as many as 5,000 to flee the country.

In May, the Memorial civil rights group which monitors human rights in Russia, said that [75 Jehovah's Witnesses had been detained](#) and charged with extremism between February and May this year – pushing the number of members persecuted under Russia's criminal law to 154.

Memorial itself has also been repeatedly attacked by Russia's Justice Ministry and was declared a "foreign agent" in 2016. It has also been forced to suffer [inspection after inspection](#) based on information received from "unknown" sources. Under Russian law, any NGO that takes part in "political activity" and receives money from abroad [must declare itself as a "foreign agent"](#).

Dvorkin also gave an interview in a 2009 documentary called [Emergency Investigation: Jehovah's Witnesses](#), in which he compared them to drug dealers and called them "slaves".

He was also the hand behind a recent ban on yoga classes in prisons after he published an academic paper warning of how yoga can lead to sexual arousal, which in turn can lead to homosexual contact between inmates. The cause was quickly picked up by Yelena Mizulina, a parliament member who has proposed a variety of anti-gay bills, and classes in prison were [temporarily dismissed](#).

Dvorkin and his followers also get fuel for the fire from [Russia Spiritual Security concept](#), which was defined by the Putin administration in 2000 as:

"Assurance of the Russian Federation's national security also includes protecting the cultural and spiritual-moral legacy and the historical traditions and standards of public life, and preserving the cultural heritage of all Russia's peoples. There must be a state policy to maintain the population's spiritual and moral welfare, prohibit the use of airtime to promote violence or base instincts, and counter the adverse impact of foreign religious organisations and missionaries."

HRWF and other organisations have [recommended that](#):

"The United Nations deprive FECRIS of its ECOSOC status as its vice-president, Alexander Dvorkin, supports Russia's ban of Jehovah's Witnesses and the prohibition of any of their individual and collective religious activities,

The French government stops financing FECRIS."

The Dvorkin files

Delving into Dvorkin's past brought up some [interesting details](#): He was initially part of the hippie movement in Russia while studying Moscow in Russia and was finally expelled from the Moscow Pedagogical Institute in 1975, before eventually landing in the United States in 1977.

After graduating from Hunter College in Russian Literature, Dvorkin landed at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York, and graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1983. From there on, he got a doctorate, worked for a short while at the Voice of America in Washington before becoming a subdeacon at the Washington St. Nicholas Cathedral.

Upon his return to Russia in 1991, Dvorkin became regular on radio and television and wrote several books on cults. Since then, not just Hindus, but Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, the Salvation Army, Mormons, Falun Gong and Scientologists have been on his radar.

Over the years, he's won a fair share of critics. For instance, here's how Religious Freedom Watch describes Dvorkin:

"Dvorkin's mandate is spreading hate propaganda about religious groups. He manipulates information, pulling quotes out of context in order to create "alarming" stories. He then uses his position in the Moscow Patriarchy to circulate this disinformation on government and official lines..."

In a video, various professors and experts on religion from around the world criticise Dvorkin's methodology. As one expert put it: "He creates his own 'facts', which is very dangerous." You can watch the video [here](#).

The backlash against Dvorkin has also been immense. For one, hackers allegedly leaked several personal files, including one with details of a psychological evaluation on a site called [fecris.net](#), which is among the first links Google shows on searching for FECRIS.

Another website [published Dvorkin's explanation of the psychological evaluation](#): "I was a hippie in 1974 and at that time many of us claimed mental instability in order to avoid the draft."

According to [gazetaprotestant.ru](#): "After a month in a psychiatric hospital (which was standard procedure), he was recognised as unstable and unfit to serve in the army. Practically all the [revelations] these hackers are now distributing stem from that hospital stay. Someone had illegally obtained access to these hospital documents and forged some."

The heat is on

After [police raids](#) were conducted on Prakash's apartment and ashram in November 2017, the matter was even [mentioned in parliament by state Duma deputy of the Communist Party](#), V.F. Rashkin, who said that Dvorkin had deliberately created the "conflict".

"Relations between our country and India have been the most friendly since Soviet times. We need friendship and peace... If this is Dvorkin's personal attitude, he incites hatred, and it's very bad. But if it's not Dvorkin who is involved, but someone else, it is even worse," he said.

In March that very same year, Rashkin has asked various government bodies to "check Dvorkin's activities for extremism".

According to Prasad, "radical nationalists of the orthodoxy" have been triggered more and more against his father and his devotees since the court win. "Right now they are attacking the businesses of my father's disciples. This has resulted in great public outcry from Hindu businessmen who live in Russia," he said.

"But I am sure we will fight the injustice till the end. If you have the will, then you can change anything," Prasad said.

Recommended reading:

<https://www.newsweek.com/hindu-russia-orthodox-cult-religion-789860>

Inappropriate prohibition of religious literature

Sova Center (13.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2mZM7Hz> - Earlier this month, Sheremetyevo Airport Customs announced the seizure of *Fortress of the Muslim* (various editions of this book are included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials) from a passenger arriving from the UAE. Cases against him were opened under Article 16.2 Part 1 (non-declaration of goods) and Article 16.3 (non-observance of interdictions and (or) restrictions on exportation of goods into the customs territory of the Eurasian Economic Union) of the Code of Administrative Offenses. Border guards at the Veseloyarsk checkpoint of Altaysky Krai seized three copies of banned books, *Fortress of the Muslim* and *Faza'il-e-A'maal*, from citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

Fortress of the Muslim is a popular collection of prayers for every day, which, in our opinion, contains no signs of incitement to religious hatred; therefore, the courts did not have grounds to recognize it as extremist.

Faza'il-e-A'maal is a collection of treatises by Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi, an ideologist of the Islamic movement Tablighi Jamaat, which is recognized as extremist in Russia. Tablighi Jamaat was never implicated in calls for violence, and we consider its prohibition inappropriate. In our opinion, the courts also did not have sufficient grounds to ban the texts of the Tablighi Jamaat ideologues, including the treatises of Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi.

A report under Article 16.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses was compiled in August by customs officers with respect to a Yekaterinburg resident, who transported Jehovah's Witnesses books, including the banned publication "What does the Bible really teach?" through Koltsovo Airport in June. In our opinion, recognition of this book as extremist, as well as the overall ban against Jehovah's Witnesses literature, was inappropriate.

USCIRF statement on travel ban for Russian religious freedom violators

USCIRF (13.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2mceKAz> - In response to the U.S. State Department's recent decision to publicly designate Russian officials Vladimir Petrovich Yermolayev and Stepan Vladimirovich Tkach, as well as their immediate families, as ineligible for entry into the United States for their involvement in the arrest and torture of Jehovah's Witnesses in the city of Surgut, USCIRF Chair Tony Perkins and Vice Chair Gayle Manchin issued the following statements:

"USCIRF welcomes the State Department's first application of these sanctions to a religious freedom-related case," said Perkins, referencing Section 7031(c) of its Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act. "It is fitting that this designation has been applied to the Russian Federation, which continues to brazenly violate international standards of religious freedom."

"In recent years, Russia has not only accelerated its persecution of domestic religious minorities, but it has also exported its repression to neighboring territories like Ukrainian

Crimea, where restrictive religious policies remain a bulwark of the occupation regime," said Manchin.

Since 2017, USCIRF has recommended the designation of the Russian Federation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom and has called for visa bans against officials involved in gross violations of religious freedom in its recent 2019 Annual Report.

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is an independent, bipartisan federal government entity established by the U.S. Congress to monitor, analyze and report on threats to religious freedom abroad. USCIRF makes foreign policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress intended to deter religious persecution and promote freedom of religion or belief. To interview a Commissioner, please contact USCIRF at Media@USCIRF.gov or Kellie Boyle at kboyle@uscirf.gov or +1-703-898-6554.

European Russian Orthodox reject Moscow patriarchate

In Paris, out of 186 delegates from 10 nations, 104 voted in favor and 75 against. But two thirds of the voters were needed. A victory for the "ecumenical" role of Constantinople. The Russian archdiocese of Europe is composed of 65 parishes, with 11 large open churches, two monasteries and seven hermitages, a clergy of over 100 priests and 30 deacons.

By Vladimir Rozanskij

AsiaNews (10.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2IIZprb> - The general assembly of European Russian Orthodox has rejected the proposal of Archbishop Johann (Jean Renneteau) to move to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Out of 186 delegates present, from 10 European countries, 104 voted in favor (58%) and 75 against, while two thirds of voters were required for this decision; the proposal was therefore rejected by only 4 votes.

The assembly met yesterday 9 September in a Catholic monastery near the Orthodox cathedral of St. Aleksandr Nevskij in Rue Darue in Paris (see photo). This is the historical site of the exarchate of the Russian emigrants after the revolution, subsequently transformed into an Archdiocese of Western Europe.

The assembly was presided over by Archbishop Johann, now dismissed from the Church-mother of Constantinople and deprived of the titular seat of "Chariopoulis". Johann did not have the right to vote. The main report was given by protopriest Johann Heyt, a member of the commission for negotiations with the other Orthodox Churches. According to Heyt, the assembly would have approved the passage under the omoforion (patriarchal stole) of Moscow.

One of the most authoritative priests, Father Aleksij Struve, underlined the serious canonical violations that occurred over the recent past, in which the very liberal status of the Orthodox world was ignored. He himself revealed that a French judge was present in the room, to record any further violations, one of which was the obligation to vote for the passage to Moscow, avoiding the alternatives that had also been presented. A favorable

decision could have been challenged in court. Other members of the assembly also supported the complaint of Fr. Struve.

Against the background of the discussions remains the clash between Moscow and Constantinople. Since the Paris vote, Constantinople has achieved a significant result: a strong group has emerged that despite the "russicità" of the archdiocese, is not willing to submit to the Muscovite opponent. This increases the isolation of the Moscow patriarchate in the Orthodox world, highlighting instead the "ecumenical" role of Constantinople.

A somewhat partial declaration on the event has come from Moscow. For patriarchal spokesmen, "although the numerical majority has voted in favor of moving to Moscow jurisdiction, the statute of the European archdiocese prevents this decision; the results of the decision presuppose the continuation of the consultations". For Moscow it is still possible to convince the recalcitrants and finally obtain the absorption of this important fragment of Russian orthodoxy into the original body of the Moscow patriarchate.

The Russian archdiocese of Europe is composed of 65 parishes, with 11 large open churches, two monasteries and seven hermitages, a clergy of over 100 priests and 30 deacons.

CRIMEA: Russia's destruction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Crimea hits unexpected hurdle

By Halya Coynash

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (10.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2m1sSfU> - With Russia on the verge of destroying virtually the last remaining Ukrainian Orthodox Church place of worship in occupied Crimea, the UN Human Rights Committee has stepped in. The Committee has applied its Rule 94 as an interim measures, and thus halted the eviction of the congregation from the Cathedral of Vladimir and Olga in the centre of Simferopol. This is, of course, if Russia does not simply flout the order, however Serhiy Zayets, who is representing 50 members of the congregation, notes that Russia is shortly due to report to UN bodies on its human rights record in a broader context. Flagrant refusal to obey such a ruling is fraught with "serious reputational losses", Zayets believes.

Zayets applied to the UN Human Rights Committee on behalf of over fifty parishioners who complain of persecution by the Russian occupation authorities. In the letter dated 6 September, which he has made public, the Committee informs that the case has been accepted, and that Russia "has been requested" to not evict the congregation from the Cathedral until the case has been considered. Russia has also been invited to provide comments on the substance of the complaints made.

This was categorically not what Russia was expecting. Zayets reports that the Russian-controlled court of appeal had, at the end of August, upheld the ruling of the de facto 'Crimean Arbitration Court' from 28 June. This had ordered the dissolution of the lease agreement for the Cathedral of Vladimir and Olga signed in 2002 between the Ukrainian authorities (the Crimean Property Fund) and the Crimean Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate, and the eviction of the Church congregation from the Cathedral. Klyment had reported on 8 February this year that he had received a writ ordering that he vacate the Cathedral within 30 days. The Archbishop then warned that this was likely to lead to eight parishes in rural areas also

being forced to close. On 27 March, the Church received another letter from this 'ministry', which terminated the lease agreement. The letter claimed that this was because the Church is in debt, however the sum, as Zayets mentioned, was nominal, and in fact the Archbishop denies that anything at all is owed.

All such court procedure was, like the Russian-controlled appeal court ruling, a formal pretext. As Zayets noted, the occupation regime had not even waited for the final stage and had already begun destroying Church property under the guise of 'renovations' and had set up a fence around the building. The dismantling of the roof resulted in a significant part of the Cathedral being flooded. Then in late July 2019, Archbishop Klyment made photos public of the devastation inside the premises of the Cathedral and the Eparchiate. He reported that the effective plundering of the Cathedral had taken place while he was away. A large wooden Cross, which they had obviously decided was not worth stealing, could be seen dumped, together with workmen's equipment. The Archbishop stressed that this attack on the Church was a blow to Ukrainians for whom the Church, since 2014, has provided the only hearth for their Ukrainian identity since annexation.

The battle to seize control of the Cathedral of Vladimir and Olga began soon after Russia's invasion and has continued, with Klyment even attacked during a raid on the Cathedral in which crosses and icons were seized. This is partly a move aimed at seizing a major site in Simferopol, which Klyment has said he was almost immediately after annexation offered 200 thousand USD to vacate. Since he, obviously, refused, the occupation regime used trumped-up pretexts for its plunder.

This move is also part of the aggressive offensive and repressive measures against the Ukrainian Church in Crimea since annexation and against Klyment himself. He was detained on 3 March, when he was already seated on a coach to Rostov in Russia for the latest hearing in the 'trial' of Ukrainian political prisoner Pavlo Hryb. Two pretexts were found, both insultingly implausible, for holding Klyment in detention until late evening. It is possible that the occupation authorities were planning administrative arrest, but were deterred by the publicity the move received.

All faiths, except the Orthodox Church under the Moscow Patriarchate, have come under fire in occupied Crimea, but the Orthodox Church under the Kyiv Patriarchate was the first to be attacked, probably because of its openly pro-Ukrainian position and its public statement on 11 March 2014 condemning Russian occupation of Crimea.

In just the first year, 38 out of 46 parishes ceased to exist, and in at very least three cases, churches were seized by the occupation regime: in Sevastopol; Simferopol and in the village of Perevalne. Of 25 priests in 2014, by October 2018 there were only four. There had been nine until the summer of 2018, however five had left for mainland Ukraine after a number of searches of the homes of members of the Ukrainian Cultural Centre and after it became clear that the lack of a Russian passport was likely to be used against them.

Lack of such registration has given Russia weapons to use in depriving the Church and believers of their places of worship and of other rights. Other methods have also been used, including the threat of physical reprisals by the armed paramilitaries, especially in 2014, vulnerability over the lack of Russian citizenship and also economic intimidation. There have been threats, for example, against those businesspeople who provided premises for the Church to use, with this a reason why many religious communities have lost their places of worship.

CRIMEA: Russia is barbarically vandalizing UNESCO world heritage site at Chersonese in occupied Crimea

Russia has dangerous construction plans for a site in occupied Crimea on the UNESCO World Heritage List, with one of the reasons linked with Moscow's attempts to rewrite its own history.

UKRINFORM (10.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/32gXavE> - As UNESCO explains, the site in Crimea holds the remains of the ancient city of Tauric Chersonese which was founded by Dorian Greeks in the 5th century BC. As well as urban remains, there is also agricultural land, divided into several hundreds of chora, or rectangular plots of equal size which were used for vineyards. Production from the latter was exported by the city which thrived until the 15th century.

Chersonese was added to the World Heritage List in 2013, with mention then of the threats posed to the site by its close proximity to the expanding boundaries of Sevastopol and major issues with conservation.

Recent developments at Chersonese are already putting the site in serious danger, and the plans that the Russian occupiers are proposing only intensify the danger.

During the latest illegal visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin on 11 August, Russian state television showed him attending an elaborate event with lights and special effects staged at the site of the ruins. TV1 reported that Putin had been told of "plans for the development of the reserve", with these including a museum of Christianity, and archaeological center and a museum of antiquity and Byzantine.

The ideas were put forward by Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov) of Pskov and Porkhov, who is often described as the former KGB agent's confessor, and who clearly shares Putin's 'Russian world' ideas. The performance was probably based on a version of the history of Crimea and Chersonese written by Tikhon, whose writing plans also include a book about Joseph Stalin.

Whether or not there was an original plan for a museum of Christianity in 1914, it is very clear why such a museum fits the narrative which Moscow has pushed about Crimea and its attempts to treat the peninsula's history as its own. Any link with Russia begins with the peninsula's seizure as part of the Russian Empire in 1783. It is a matter of dispute whether Vladimir [or Volodymyr] the Great was himself baptized in Chersonese or in Kyiv, however, the Russian Orthodox Church had certainly earlier never questioned that the mass baptism that marked the Christianization of Kyivan Rus in 988 took place in Kyiv. This is a problem for adherents of 'Russian world' mythology, and it seems likely that the museum would be aimed at pushing a different, more 'Russian', version of events, one that would gel with Putin's claim that Crimea has 'sacred' significance for Russia.

Anatoly Tumanov, who earlier worked at the Tauric Chersonese museum complex, has told Krym.Realii that under Russian control the museum is not run by scholars, but by "some kind of people with the words 'Russian Foundation – my history' on their backs". He says that they do whatever they please and clearly have no idea where they are, as seen by how they prop metallic fencing against ancient walls.

Tumanov reacted also with horror to another idea floated by the Russian Orthodox Church that it has an active monastery on the territory of Chersonese. This, he says, could seriously damage this monument of world heritage.

Albina Gaevskaya is another Sevastopol scholar, who shares Tumanov's concerns.

In a Facebook post entitled 'Save Chersonese!' on 12 August, she posted a copy of her letter to Vladimir Medinsky, Russia's minister of culture.

In it she points out that UNESCO has not been carrying out monitoring visits to Chersonese since 2014, as it does not recognize Russia's 'jurisdiction' It is probably because of this, she says, that the current management of the museum are carrying out disastrous 'reconstruction' of the ruins of the ancient city without any obstruction and with impunity.

She warns that, as a result, the ancient city could simply disappear. She mentions wooden boards being used to cover the stone roads of the city, with no consideration of the state that these boards will get in. She is even more damning of the methods used to popularize the place, with little booths built where people can supposedly learn about its history and "incredibly ugly banners that look like gallows". They appear to be trying to turn the place into something like a summer opera theatre or state, with tens or hundreds of meters of cables being stretched out over the territory of the monument for lighting, etc. All of this is enabling them to make profit from events there, but the massive constructions are seriously threatening the integrity of these ruins. Gaevskaya warns that UNESCO may well strip the site of its world heritage status if it sees what is being done to the ancient ruins, how structures that have nothing to do with Chersonese are being erected, and how they're rolling machines weighing many tons over areas that have not yet been excavated.

While UNESCO is, hopefully, following developments, it has not yet visited Crimea, with the reason in its case, as with other international bodies and NGOs, is probably deliberate policy by Russia. Crimea remains Ukrainian territory, and, while Kyiv is not prohibiting any visits to the peninsula, it does demand that delegations cross into Crimea from mainland Ukraine. Russia, on the other hand, is demanding that any delegates go from Russia and in accordance with Russian legislation. This probably explains why, despite the reports from Ukraine's Foreign Ministry that UNESCO would be sending a direct monitoring delegation in April 2019, this has so far not happened.

Any major construction work at the site of Tauric Chersones, is prohibited, and all conservation measures should be clearly detailed, and agreed with UNESCO.

Russia has already caused immeasurable damage to other sites of historic and national significance in occupied Crimea, with the worst and most barbaric damage inflicted on the 16th Century Khan's Palace in Bakhchysarai, a site of immense significance for Crimean Tatars in particular, and for Ukraine. Details here: ['Closed for Destruction': Russia is digging up 16th Century Crimean Tatar Khan's Palace.](#)

Losing places of worship

Complex, sometimes contradictory, and often inconsistently applied legislation can lead religious communities to lose their places of worship. Officials barred a

Baptist community in Novorossiysk from using its church "for religious purposes", despite the fact that it has worshipped on the same site for two decades. Local authorities are often unwilling to permit the construction of purpose-built churches and mosques.

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (06.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/321sqxy> - Some religious communities in Russia are facing the loss of their places of worship because of a combination of complex, sometimes contradictory, and often inconsistently applied legislation, and the unwillingness of local authorities to permit the construction of purpose-built churches and mosques, Forum 18 has found.

In one current example, a Baptist community in Novorossiysk has been barred from using its church "for religious purposes", despite the fact that it has worshipped on the same site for two decades (see below).

The authorities tried to have the house where the church meets demolished in 2018. When this failed, they began seeking through the courts a ban on use of the building for worship. Bailiffs sealed the door to the prayer hall on 7 July 2019 (see below).

The ban is a "flagrant violation" of the Religion Law and of the Constitution, Presbyterian Yevgeny Kokora commented, as it prevents believers from coming together to profess their faith (see below).

Officials in Novorossiysk have failed to respond to Forum 18's detailed written questions about the enforced closure of the Baptist church (see below).

Other recent cases include the demolition of a Muslim prayer room in Kaliningrad Region, and the possible demolition of a Pentecostal church in Samara.

Such cases can arise because communities meet in residential or other private property. This means that they may easily contravene, knowingly or unknowingly, the complicated requirements of Russia's land laws. Municipal government responses are frequently heavy-handed.

"The problem is systemic in nature," lawyer Vladimir Ozolin of the Moscow-based Slavic Centre for Law and Justice commented to Forum 18 on 3 September. "Prejudice by the authorities towards Protestants is aggravated, in most cases, by non-compliance with laws and norms by the religious organisations themselves."

Protestant communities find it "practically impossible" to get permission to build churches, Ozolin commented to the Bog.news website on 20 May. "Therefore, believers are forced to conduct worship services in residential buildings. But that is not a violation of the law."

Whatever the ostensible motivation of the authorities in depriving a congregation of its place of worship or the means by which they effect closure or demolition, the outcome is the same – the displacement of a usually small local religious community, marginalisation, insecurity, and expense.

Such a community often does not have much money and usually no other space it can use. It may have encountered difficulties in the past in trying to obtain land or rent property for worship, or may have been put off by such difficulties experienced by fellow believers elsewhere.

Difficulties in building dedicated places of worship

Groups the government regards as "non-traditional" – Baptists, other Protestants, the Society for Krishna Consciousness – have long encountered difficulties in building their own dedicated spaces to meet and pray together, ie. structures entered in the cadastral register as religious buildings, on land designated as being for religious purposes.

In some places, the situation is also difficult for communities belonging to so-called "traditional" faiths, such as the Muslims of Kaliningrad.

Problems may arise at every stage, from the allocation of land and the securing of planning permission, to raising enough money to finish building before permits expire.

Sometimes, the authorities change local planning regulations or withdraw permissions part-way through the process. This can leave construction incomplete and congregations millions of Roubles in debt.

Because of this, such communities often have no option other than to hold services in private houses or other premises, whether these are existing structures (often the home of a religious leader or community member) or new structures on land designated for individual residential construction.

Up to 90 per cent of Protestant places of worship are officially recorded as residential property, Seventh-day Adventist lawyer Vasily Nichik estimated to Forum 18 in 2018.

Religious worship permitted on residential premises?

According to the 1997 Religion Law, religious worship is permitted on residential premises and in any other building formally given to a community for the purpose, but communities or their leaders are often accused of using land or property not for its intended purpose, or of otherwise violating planning regulations, e.g. by building "unauthorised structures".

"In most cases, no matter how sad it is to say, the authorities' demands are justified," lawyer Vladimir Ozolin commented to Bog.news. "At the same time, you can always find a compromise and solve the problem peacefully by bringing the residential building into line with the requirements, but for reasons unknown to me, in most cases, the authorities are not ready for dialogue in this regard."

Often, religious communities worship in residential or other structures for years without incurring any problems. They are, however, at the mercy of both changing circumstances – a change in local government, amendments to land use legislation – and a range of inspections by various state bodies, from the Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre, and Cartography (Rosreestr) to the security services. Any of these could result in serious consequences for minor or non-existent violations, often of regulations unrelated to the initial inspection (e.g. a prosecutor's office check for compliance with the Extremism Law may lead to a lawsuit for non-compliance with land legislation).

Novorossiysk: Baptist Union church sealed

Baptists in the village of Verkhnebakansky, on the outskirts of Novorossiysk in southern European Russia, have been forced to hold services in their front yard and the street after local authorities had them banned from using their own prayer hall and bailiffs sealed the door on 7 July 2019. The community is led by Pastor Vitaly Bak.

The ban is a "flagrant violation" of the Religion Law and of the Constitution, another Novorossiysk Baptist presbyter Yevgeny Kokora commented, as it prevents believers from coming together to profess their faith.

"Unfortunately, such a situation became possible due to the reluctance or inability of the head of the Novorossiysk administration to conduct interfaith dialogue," Kokora complained on his Facebook page on 15 July. "Despite the scandal, so far, none of the local authorities has even tried to contact us in order somehow to discuss this problem and find a solution."

On 17 January 2019, nearly six months before bailiffs sealed the door, Krasnodar Regional Court had upheld the Novorossiysk city administration's lawsuit aimed at prohibiting the house's owner "and other persons" from using it for "religious purposes", as (according to the court decision, seen by Forum 18) its land plot lay within a "zone of educational facilities and scientific complexes" (a secondary school occupies the next plot).

The judge also concluded that no formal agreement existed granting the community use of the building, and that the building lacked the security cameras and sprinkler system required in "places of mass gatherings of people". This ruling overturned Novorossiysk's Primorsky District Court's original refusal on 24 September 2018 to grant the administration's request.

The Novorossiysk zoning laws of 2014, cited by the administration and seen by Forum 18, do not, however, forbid the continued use of existing structures which ended up in the "wrong" zone. According to the cadastral register, the house containing the Baptist prayer hall was completed in 2012.

Neither religious nor residential buildings are among the explicitly permitted uses of land in an "educational" zone, but the rules state that existing plots and structures whose use is not in line with latest regulations may be used as before, as long as such use does not endanger people's lives or health, the surrounding environment, or historical and cultural monuments (in such cases, use can then be prohibited).

Article 16, Part 2 of the federal Religion Law states that "worship services [and] other religious rites and ceremonies" may be held unhindered on residential premises, and mentions no requirement for a formal agreement. The Baptists also insist that their building did have the necessary cameras and sprinklers in place.

The Baptists' cassational appeal is still pending at Krasnodar Regional Court. They are also trying to obtain an "Anti-Terrorism Protection passport" (which certifies the presence of security and fire safety systems, etc.) from the National Guard, "but there they don't understand how to do this", according to Yevgeny Kokora. He outlined in a Facebook post of 10 July how the National Guard had in fact refused to issue the "passport" as religious buildings are not legally required to have one, despite the Baptists pointing out that the house is technically residential property.

"Therefore, the decision is to continue to go through the courts and reach the European Court of Human Rights," Kokora told Forum 18 on 27 August.

On 12 July 2019, Pastor Vitaly Bak also lodged a suit requesting that the administration's and bailiffs' actions in sealing the hall be ruled unlawful. Novorossiysk's Primorsky District Court rejected his suit at a hearing on 2 September 2019, according to the court website.

"If we do not defend our constitutional rights, then, using the example of Verkhnebakansky, other prayer houses that conduct religious services in residential

buildings will begin to close," Kokora commented to Forum 18 on 27 August. "In Russia, at the behest of the state, most communities in the Evangelical churches gather in private households, since it is impossible to obtain official permission to build a house of worship."

Problems after two decades' worship on the site

The Verkhnebakansky congregation is an unregistered religious group which is part of the Russian Baptist Union. It has worshipped in the building – a residential house built on land designated for individual residential construction, according to the cadastral register – since it was completed in 2012, and on the same site for over twenty years, Kokora told Forum 18.

The congregation had had no problems with this arrangement until spring 2018, when the city administration initiated a series of legal measures against it. Until November 2018, both the house and its land plot belonged to community member Ivan Gavrilov. Because of poor health and the multiple lawsuits involving the property, he then sold it to Pastor Vitaly Bak.

One tenant lives in the building, Kokora explained to Forum 18, and he has retained access to the rest of the rooms. At first, the authorities had "wanted to evict him and seal the whole house, but when they saw he was elderly and had disabilities, they took pity and sealed only the main entrance and the hall".

Religious groups are not legal entities, and so cannot buy or rent property on their own behalf, or have it legally transferred to them. They therefore rely on their members to provide space for worship, which is almost invariably in residential or commercial premises.

Presbyter Kokora traces the beginning of the Verkhnebakansky congregation's problems to a change in leadership in the Novorossiysk administration and "new people in the internal politics of the city".

He noted that the administration has also brought about the demolition of a Pentecostal church and has banned another Protestant congregation from using its building too. "There are no other bans in relation to the rest of the Baptists [in Novorossiysk]," Pastor Kokora added, "but this is only because we have taken an active and public position". Novorossiysk has a total of eight Baptist Union communities.

2018 demolition order

The administration's actions against the Verkhnebakansky Baptists began with the issuing of a demolition order on 15 March 2018. The authorities claimed that the house was an "unauthorised structure" (samovolnaya postroyka), built without proper permissions.

Then-owner Ivan Gavrilov's attempts to have this order ruled unlawful were unsuccessful (on 21 June 2018 and 8 November 2018, according to court documents seen by Forum 18). The order was later rescinded when the Baptists managed to show that all documentation for both house and land was "in perfect order", according to Yevgeny Kokora. "I think this was calculated as an act of intimidation," he added, "but we're hard nuts to crack".

Meanwhile, the administration was also preparing its suit to have religious use of the property prohibited. Novorossiysk's Primorsky District Court initially rejected the suit

without consideration in May 2018. It was then accepted for consideration on appeal and refused. It was upheld only in January 2019 by Krasnodar Regional Court.

Ivan Gavrilov and Vitaly Bak lodged two cassational appeals against the suit on 8 May 2019. Bak's was rejected without consideration on 5 June 2019, but Gavrilov's is still pending, according to the court website.

According to reports on state-owned NTV and a 9 July statement on the Krasnodar Region Bailiffs' Service website, there had been "numerous complaints from neighbours" about the Baptists' services. On 12 July, however, local news service Svobodniye Media asked the Novorossiysk police if Verkhnebakansky locals had made any complaints to them about the Baptists. The police confirmed on 17 July, in a letter seen by Forum 18, that no such complaints had been received.

Administration officials, accompanied by police and FSB security service officers and Cossacks, made an unannounced inspection of the building on Sunday 7 April 2019. They disrupted the Annunciation Day service which was underway at the time, and forbade church members from filming what was going on.

Yevgeny Kokora remarked in a Facebook post of 15 July that the visit was in fact recorded on the building's own security cameras, which the community had been accused of not having installed.

Shortly afterwards, presbyter Yury Korniyenko, who had been leading the service, was charged with unlawful missionary activity under Administrative Code Article 5.26, Part 4 ("Russians conducting missionary activity").

On 14 June, Novorossiysk Magistrate's Court No. 79 fined Korniyenko 10,000 Roubles (about 10 days' average local wage), despite the fact that, on the one hand, no non-Baptists had been present at the service, and on the other, he had full written authorisation from the religious group to perform missionary activity anyway.

The judge noted the regional court ruling of 17 January prohibiting religious use of the building. Korniyenko appealed unsuccessfully against his conviction at Novorossiysk's Primorsky District Court on 23 July 2019.

Novorossiysk administration fails to answer questions

Forum 18 wrote to the Novorossiysk administration's press service and land and property department on 25 August and again on 4 September to ask why the administration wants to bar the Baptists from their building, when they have used the site for over 20 years, and why the 2014 Rules of Land Use had been invoked in court when they allow for continued use of existing structures.

Forum 18 also asked how the Baptists could get their prayer hall unsealed and whether the administration would allocate a plot of land elsewhere for the construction of a purpose-built place of worship.

Forum 18 received no reply by the middle of the working day in Novorossiysk on 6 September. Telephones at the land and property department went unanswered when Forum 18 called on 5 and 6 September.

Three unsuccessful bids for public meetings

Since the start of August, the Baptists have made three unsuccessful attempts to arrange a public meeting in Novorossiysk "to draw the attention of the local authorities and the

state" to the requirements of the Constitution and the necessity of inter-confessional dialogue, and the obligation to allow religious groups to worship freely in accordance with the Religion Law, according to the latest application, seen by Forum 18.

The city administration has rejected all three event notifications on grounds of technical irregularities. The Baptists plan to try again to arrange the meeting for 22 September.

Over 60% of Russians identify as Orthodox, 1 out of every 6 is atheist

Interfax-Religion (14.08.2019) - <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=15235> - Two-thirds of Russian citizens (63%) identify as Orthodox, according to a poll done by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) obtained by *Interfax* on Wednesday.

According to the sociological poll, an overwhelming majority of orthodox Christians (86%) have been baptized and two-thirds of them (66%) were baptized because their parents or relatives had decided so.

The study shows that 34% of the respondents believe people should decide whether they want to be baptized at an adult age. The percentage of the respondents who said that is the highest among young people aged between 18 and 24 (59%).

According to VCIOM, five percent of the respondents identify as Muslims, one percent identify as Catholic, one percent identify as protestant, six percent of the respondents say they believe, but do not belong to any of the confessions. The poll shows that six percent of the respondents are undecided whether they believe in God or are atheists.

The poll shows that 15% of the respondents identify as atheists. The percentage of atheists among young people aged between 18 and 24 is 37%.

"Analyzing the results of the study, one should seriously think about the increasing tendency towards the formation of a faith crisis in general and Orthodoxy in particular. Generation Z, which is also called the first fully digital generation, declares a considerable increase in the percentage of non-believers and an almost three times decrease in the percentage of Orthodox Christians," Kirill Rodin, VCIOM director for work with bodies of state authority, was quoted by the VCIOM press service as saying.

"The new generation has many differences from its predecessors, but there is no doubt that one of the dominating ones is that these are people from a new communication reality, which has new laws and instruments of influence on the formation of people's outlook on life. The slowing modernization of the old formats of interaction with young people may become a fatal landmark in the identification of a new place and role of the institution of faith in society," Rodin said.

The poll was conducted on July 26, 2019. It surveys 1,600 respondents aged 18 and older.

CRIMEA: Prisoner sent to Russia, more awaiting trial

Arrested in 2017, sentenced in January 2019, Muslim prisoner of conscience Renat Suleimanov has lost all his appeals. In May he was transferred from occupied Crimea to a labour camp in Russia, where he was placed in punishment cell. A court extended Imam Rustem Abilev's pre-trial detention.

Russian FSB officers raided Jehovah's Witnesses in Yevpatoriya and Sevastopol, bringing another criminal case.

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (26.07.2019) - <https://bit.ly/31SVhof> - In May, the Russian authorities transferred 49-year-old Muslim prisoner of conscience Renat Suleimanov from occupied Crimea to a labour camp in Russia. After his eventual arrival at the camp in Kabardino-Balkariya, the camp administration placed him in a punishment cell. Suleimanov, who on 11 July lost his second appeal against his four-year jail term, is planning an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War covers the rights of civilians in territories occupied by another state (described as "protected persons"). Article 76 includes the provision: "Protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied country, and if convicted they shall serve their sentences therein."

Suleimanov – who has been in jail since his October 2017 arrest - met with friends to study his faith in local mosques. Prosecutors accused him of being a member of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, which Russia's Supreme Court has banned as an "extremist" organisation (see below).

Meanwhile, a court in Sevastopol has extended the pre-trial detention of 45-year-old Imam Rustem Abilev. Arrested by the Russian FSB security service on 15 April, he is being investigated on charges of "public calls for extremist activity". "Local residents and activists say Rustem Abilev cannot have called for extremism," a Radio Free Europe journalist told Forum 18 in April (see below).

Russia's FSB security service is also seeking to prosecute Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses, a community Russia's Supreme Court has also banned as an "extremist" organisation.

FSB officers raided Jehovah's Witnesses meeting in a home in Yevpatoriya on 13 July. Officers singled out for interrogation Oleg Osetsky, questioning him all night at the police station although he felt unwell (see below).

On 4 June, Russian FSB investigators launched a criminal case against Sevastopol resident Viktor Stashevsky, accusing him of Jehovah's Witness activity. That evening, the FSB raided at least nine homes, with a further follow-up raid on 7 July (see below).

The FSB Investigator handling Stashevsky's case - Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin – is also conducting the criminal investigation into fellow Crimean Jehovah's Witness Sergei Filatov, launched in November 2018. Lieutenant Chumakin has repeatedly refused to talk to Forum 18 (see below).

Earlier in 2019, Suleimanov and Filatov were added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions. Investigators had Abilev and Stashevsky added on 11 July (see below).

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.

Russia's Supreme Court banned the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement in 2009. The ban was extended to Crimea following Russia's 2014 annexation of the peninsula.

Russia's Supreme Court banned Jehovah's Witnesses in April 2017. It declared the Jehovah's Witness Russian headquarters in St Petersburg and all 395 local organisations "extremist", banned all their activity immediately, and ordered their property seized by the state. The ban was immediately imposed in Russian-occupied Crimea, where 22 communities were liquidated.

Religious communities and individuals in Crimea 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. Forty such administrative prosecutions are known to have been brought in 2018 of which 28 ended with punishment.

Suleimanov: Moscow appeals fail, preparing Strasbourg case

Prisoner of conscience Renat Rustemovich Suleimanov (born 30 August 1969) was arrested in October 2017, accused of membership of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, which Russia's Supreme Court banned in 2009. The ban was extended to Crimea following Russia's 2014 annexation of the peninsula.

Suleimanov, a Crimean Tatar, was born in exile in Kazakhstan's then capital Almaty. When the Crimean Tatars were allowed to return to Crimea, he settled in the village of Molodezhnoe just north of Crimea's capital Simferopol. He is married with three young daughters.

Suleimanov and three friends 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 told the court at their trial. "These lessons were not conspiratorial and took place in mosques."

Fifteen months after his arrest, Crimea's Supreme Court in Simferopol finally convicted Suleimanov and the three other men on 22 January 2019.

All four were sentenced under Russian 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".

The Judge jailed Suleimanov for four years in an ordinary regime labour camp, followed by one year under restrictions. He handed the other three men suspended sentences, with one year under restrictions.

Suleimanov appealed for the first time against his conviction and four-year jail term to Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow. But in a closed hearing on 16 April, the Court rejected his appeal.

On 21 June, Suleimanov lodged a second appeal to Russia's Supreme Court. However, on 11 July without a hearing the Court declined to consider his appeal, according to court records.

Suleimanov's lawyer Roman Martynovskyy and his colleagues at the Regional Centre for Human Rights, originally based in Sevastopol but now in the Ukrainian capital Kiev, are preparing his case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, he told Forum 18 from Kiev on 26 July.

Suleimanov: Transferred to Russian jail

On 18 May, prison officials began the transfer of Suleimanov from the Investigation Prison in the Crimean capital Simferopol to serve his sentence at a labour camp (correctional colony) in the village of Kamenka near Kabardino-Balkariya's regional capital Nalchik in the Russian North Caucasus. Sometimes such transfers can take a month or longer.

Kamenka is about 950 kms (590 miles) by road from Simferopol.

Once arrived at the Kamenka camp Suleimanov was, like all newly-arrived prisoners, placed in quarantine, which usually lasts about two weeks. However in early July, immediately after the quarantine period, camp officials placed him in a punishment cell, his lawyer Martynovskyy told Forum 18.

An official at the Kamenka camp, who did not give his name, refused to discuss Suleimanov's conditions. "I won't give you any information on why he was put in the punishment cell," the official told Forum 18 on 26 July. "I don't have the right to do so." He said Forum 18 should send a letter to the camp head, Salikh Gurizhev.

"At present I am asking the camp administration why Suleimanov has been placed in a punishment cell, as they can do this only after a disciplinary warning," the lawyer Aleksandr Lesovoi – who represented Suleimanov in his earlier hearings - told Forum 18 from Simferopol on 24 July. "After getting a response from the camp administration, if there is a basis to do so I will challenge the decision to place Suleimanov in a punishment cell."

Forum 18 was unable to ask the camp official whether Suleimanov is allowed to have religious literature with him and to pray unimpeded. His lawyer Martynovskyy said he does not know if Suleimanov can exercise freedom of religion or belief in the camp or not.

Suleimanov's labour camp address:

361424 Kabardino-Balkariya
Chegemsky raion
Pos. Kamenka
Ul. D.A. Mizieva 1
Ispravitel'naya Koloniya No. 1
Suleimanovu Renatu Rustemovichu

Abilev: Pre-trial detention extended

The Russian FSB security service continues to investigate the criminal case against Rustem Enverovich Abilev (born 18 May 1984), Imam of the Khayat (Life) mosque in the village of Shturmoev on the eastern edge of the city of Sevastopol.

On 5 June, Judge Anatoly Vasilenko of Sevastopol's Lenin District Court approved Imam Abilev's continued detention at the Investigation Prison in the Crimean capital Simferopol, court officials told Forum 18 on 25 July.

The FSB investigator Yuri Andreyev is investigating Imam Abilev under Russian Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1. This punishes "public calls for extremist activity" with a maximum punishment of four years' imprisonment and a ban on specific activity for the same period.

"Local residents and activists say Rustem Abilev cannot have called for extremism," Radio Free Europe journalist Taras Ibragimov told Forum 18 in April. "They insist he is not an extremist and don't believe the FSB allegations."

The telephone of the FSB Investigation Department in Sevastopol went unanswered each time Forum 18 called on 25 July.

FSB officers arrested Imam Abilev on 15 April as armed, masked men, most of them in camouflage with FSB insignia, raided Khayat mosque and his nearby home. Officers seized religious literature, hand-written notes and documents, computers and mobile phones. One masked man copied files from a laptop computer.

The following day, 16 April, Lenin District Court ordered Imam Abilev held in pre-trial detention for eight weeks, until 11 June. His lawyer Lenyara Gabdrakhmanova appealed against the pre-trial detention order to Sevastopol City Court. However, Judge Danil Zemlyukov rejected the appeal on 26 April, according to court records.

At the Investigator's instigation, on 11 July Abilev was added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions.

Imam Abilev earned his living as head of the dentistry department at Sevastopol's City Hospital No. 6. However, following his arrest the hospital removed his name from its website.

Following his 15 April arrest, the FSB held Imam Abilev for several days in Sevastopol before transferring him to the Investigation Prison in Simferopol. He has been held there ever since.

Abilev's Investigation Prison address:

295006 Krym
g. Simferopol
Bulvar Lenina 4
Sledstvenny Izolyator No. 1
Abilevu Rustemu Enverovichu

Yevpatoriya: Raid on Jehovah's Witnesses

On the evening of 13 July, a group of friends and acquaintances gathered in a local woman's home in the western Crimean city of Yevpatoriya. Russian FSB security service officers surrounded the entrance to the stairwell of the block of flats. FSB officers then stormed the woman's flat, Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

FSB officers interrogated those present, filming the interrogations. They also recorded the personal details of those present, seizing personal documents, discs and any printed material they had.

FSB officers singled out 57-year-old Oleg Osetsky. "As a result of the interrogation, he began to feel unwell," Jehovah's Witnesses said, "but despite this they took him to the police station and questioned him all night until six o'clock in the morning." They then released him.

FSB officers admitted to Osetsky during the interrogation that they had been keeping him under surveillance for some time. It remains unclear if FSB investigators have launched a criminal case against Osetsky.

Forum 18 was unable to reach the FSB branch in Yevpatoriya on 25 July.

Sevastopol: Criminal Case, 9 raids

In late May or early June, a Jehovah's Witness family in Sevastopol began suspecting that officials were using their internet connection to spy on them covertly. They changed their internet connection.

On 4 June, Russian FSB investigators launched a criminal case against Sevastopol resident Viktor Vladimirovich Stashevsky (born 11 July 1966), a member of the former Sevastopol Jehovah's Witness community. The community gained Russian registration in May 2015, but was among the 22 Jehovah's Witness communities across the peninsula liquidated on 17 May 2017.

The liquidations of the 22 Crimean Jehovah's Witness communities came less than four weeks after Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow in April 2017 declared the Jehovah's Witness Russian headquarters in St Petersburg and all 395 local organisations "extremist", banned all their activity immediately, and ordered their property seized by the state.

Russian FSB officials are investigating Stashevsky under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. This punishes "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 maximum punishment is ten years' imprisonment.

That evening, FSB security service officers raided at least nine local homes. The house searches were approved in advance by Judge Anatoly Vasilenko of Sevastopol's Lenin District Court. "In at least one case, officers forced their way into a flat in the absence of the owners, rendering the door unusable," Jehovah's Witnesses complained. "Searches continued until deep in the night." Officers seized computers, computer hard discs, phones and tablet computers.

During the raid on the family which had changed their internet connection, a masked man billed as a "technical specialist" accompanied the raiding team, Jehovah's Witnesses said.

In one of the raids, FSB and Spetsnaz operatives detained Stashevsky and held him overnight in an investigation cell, Jehovah's Witnesses added. After making him sign a pledge not to leave the city they released him in the morning of 5 June.

That same morning after the raids, FSB Investigator Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin summoned for interrogation those whose homes the FSB had raided.

Lieutenant Chumakin, of the Investigation Department of the Russian FSB for Crimea and Sevastopol, is based in the Crimean capital Simferopol. He is also leading the criminal

investigation into another Crimean Jehovah's Witness, Sergei Filatov from the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi (see below).

At Lieutenant Chumakin's instigation, on 11 July Stashevsky was added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions.

The man who answered Lieutenant Chumakin's phone on 25 July immediately hung up when Forum 18 introduced itself.

FSB officers made a further raid in Sevastopol a month after the initial raids. In the early morning of 7 July, officers raided the home of Vladimir Petrovsky, Jehovah's Witnesses said.

Criminal investigations of three Jehovah's Witnesses continue

The criminal case opened against Viktor Stashevsky is the third known Jehovah's Witness criminal case in the peninsula. The FSB is still investigating two other cases, against three individuals. None of the three is under arrest.

On 10 November 2018, the FSB launched a case against Sergei Filatov from the northern Crimean town of Dzhankoi. Five days later, the FSB and OMON riot police launched coordinated raids on eight Jehovah's Witness family homes. He has had to sign a pledge not to leave the town.

On 17 January 2019, Filatov was added to the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions.

On 15 March 2019, the FSB launched a case against Artyom Gerasimov and Taras Kuzio from the southern Crimean town of Yalta. Five days later, officers raided eight Jehovah's Witness family homes in and around Yalta.

Like Stashevsky, all three men are being investigated under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. This punishes "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 maximum punishment is ten years' imprisonment.

Jehovah's Witnesses: 612 home raids since the 2017 ban

HRWF (07.08.2019) - The state repression of Jehovah's Witnesses is accelerating month after month in Russia according to recent statistics provided by the headquarters of their movement in the US to Human Rights Without Frontiers, such as those about home raids: 612.

2018

281 (23.4/month)

2019 (Jan-July)

331 (47.2/month)

Over 100% increase from 2018

June/July 2019

139 (69.5/month)

Nearly 200% increase from 2018

As of July 31

241 JW's facing criminal charges

39 in detention (pretrial or prison)

27 under house arrest

As of Aug 5

244 JW's facing criminal charges

39 in detention (pretrial or prison)

27 under house arrest

Over 100 under a variety of other restrictions

Prosecutions against religious organizations and believers in June and July

SOVA Center (01.08.2019) - <https://bit.ly/33cL3Rb> - In July, we learned about several administrative prosecution cases related to religious literature that we consider inappropriately prohibited. Back in early June, the Orenburg District Court of the Orenburg Region ruled against Rustam Yerzhakovsky, a citizen of Kazakhstan, who intended to export to Turkey one copy of *The Fortress of a Muslim* – a book that has been recognized as extremist in Russia. Yerzhakovsky was fined one thousand rubles with confiscation of a banned book under Article 16.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (non-observance of interdictions and (or) restrictions on exportation of goods from the customs territory of the Eurasian Economic Union). *The Fortress of a Muslim* is a popular collection of prayers for every day, which, in our opinion, contains no signs of incitement to religious hatred, therefore the courts did not have grounds to recognize it as extremist.

In late July, Khava Shakhtamirova, a resident of Novy Urengoy, was fined two thousand rubles under Article 20.29 of the Code of Administrative Offenses for the fact that she offered passersby to study the brochure "Women in Islam versus Women in Judeo-Christian Tradition." We regard the ban on this book as inappropriate since its text is respectful of Judaism and Christianity.

In mid-July, the Supreme Court of Russia reduced by three months the lengthy terms of imprisonment faced by each of the four Crimea residents convicted in the Bakhchysarai **Hizb ut-Tahrir** case: Enver Mamutov, Rustem Abiltarov, Zevri Abseitov, and Remzi Memetov. They were convicted under Article 205.5 Part 1 or Part 2 (organizing the activities of a terrorist organization or participation in it) and under Article 278 utilizing Article 35 Part 2 and Article 30 Part 1 of the Criminal Code (preparation for forcible seizure of power by an organized group by prior conspiracy). We believe that accusing members of Hizb ut-Tahrir of involvement in terrorist activities solely on the basis of their party activities (holding meetings, reading literature, etc.) is inappropriate. Qualifying any positive comments on Hizb ut-Tahrir activities as appeals for terrorism or justification of terrorism is also inappropriate.

Prosecutions against **Jehovah's Witnesses** continued in July. Early in the month, Alexander Solovyov, a follower of this doctrine in Perm, was found guilty of participation

in the activity of an extremist organization (Article 282.2 Part 2 of the Criminal Code) and sentenced to a fine of 300 thousand rubles.

In the Nizhny Novgorod Region, cases under Article 282.2 Parts 1 and 2 of the Criminal Code (organizing the activity of an extremist organization and participation in it) were opened in July against nine Jehovah's Witnesses, two of whom – Alexei Oreshkov and Alexander Vavilov – were also incarcerated. Sergey Yavushkin and Alexander Bondarchuk were put under house arrest in Kemerovo under Article 282.2 Part 2 of the Criminal Code

Two Jehovah's Witnesses were arrested in Kaluga; one of them, Roman Makhnyov, stated that he had been subjected to inhuman treatment by the local FSB officers.

Searches in Jehovah's Witnesses' residences were conducted in a number of regions, including in the Trans-Baikal Region, which has never reported any information about criminal proceedings opened against Jehovah's Witnesses.

The decision to recognize the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and 395 local organizations as extremist was made by the Supreme Court of Russia in April 2017. We believe that this decision, which entailed mass criminal proceedings against the believers under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, was legally unfounded, and regard it as a manifestation of religious discrimination.

Falun Gong and Faizrakhmanist community (Muslim new religious movement)

Sova Center (01.07.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2OK9vGn> - We found out in June that the Nevsky District Court of St. Petersburg deemed the book *Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party* (Moscow, 2015) prohibited for distribution in Russia. The decision was made in late May upon request from the City Prosecutor's Office. This book has been distributed by the followers of the Falun Gong spiritual practice (its authorship belongs to the Epoch Times media project). The court relied on the expert opinion, which stated that the anthology contained psychological signs of incitement of hostility "against the Communist Party" and statements "aimed at inciting social enmity against followers of the Chinese Communist Party and communism in general." In our opinion, the ban against *Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party* lacks legal justification, despite the sharp criticism of the CCP's activity contained in the book. No particular political party (especially a foreign one) and no particular ideology is entitled to protection from criticism. The authors of the book stay within the framework of historical and political discussion, do not allow any manifestations of ethnic xenophobia, do not advocate violence, and, on the contrary, emphasize the importance of a "non-violent transition to a society liberated from the CCP." We believe that the decision of the Yekaterinburg court, which had previously declined the [prosecutorial request](#) to ban the book for inciting hatred toward the Chinese supporters of the CCP, was appropriate, while the decision of the St. Petersburg court constitutes excessive interference with freedom of expression.

The Sovetsky District Court of Kazan in mid-June sentenced five residents of the republic, having found them guilty of continuing the activities of the banned **Faizrakhmanist community**. Depending on their respective roles, they were found guilty of committing crimes under Parts 1 and 2 of Criminal Code Article 282.2 (organizing activity of an extremist organization or participating in it), Part 1.1 of Article 282.2 (involvement of others in activities of an extremist organization), or Part 1 of Article 282.3 (financing activity of an extremist organization). As the spiritual leader of the community, 52-year-old Gumar Ganiev was sentenced to seven years in prison to be served in a minimum-security penal colony; 58-year-old Talgat Gizatullin and 41-year-old Rustam Galiev were sentenced to five years, 58-year-old Glimyan Khazetdinov to six years, and 61-year-old Mudaris Ibragimov – to five and a half years in a penal colony. The Faizrakhmanist community founded by former deputy Mufti of Tatarstan Faizrakhman Sattarov, was recognized as an extremist organization in 2013 after the relevant agencies found out

that its members were leading an isolated way of life and did not seek help from medical institutions or send their children to schools. Such organizational features are not subject to anti-extremist legal regulation. As far as we know, the community led an insulated but not aggressive way of life; therefore the decision to recognize it as extremist was, in our opinion, inappropriate. Accordingly, we consider the sentences to the Sattarov's followers inappropriate as well.

CRIMEA: 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.

226 Jehovah's Witnesses are facing criminal charges in Russia and Crimea

HRWF (18.07.2019) - 226 Jehovah's Witnesses are being prosecuted on the basis of article 282 of Russia's criminal code across the Russian Federation and in Crimea, according to the Office of Public Information the World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses.

As of July 17:

226 JW's are facing criminal charges (the highest number since the ban in 2017)

37 are being held in detention

25 are under house arrest

On 17 July, the authorities in the city of Nizhny Novgorod (western Russia) raided homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. The total number of homes raided and of JW's arrested/detained still has to be confirmed.

Over the past 20 months, the Soviet-like persecution of JW's in Russia has been increasing in intensity and in frequency:

2018**December 9:**

108 JW's—since April 2017 ban—facing criminal charges

December 11:

Putin said: "Jehovah's Witnesses are Christians too. I don't quite understand why they are persecuted. So this should be looked into. This must be done." (during meeting w/Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights--source [link](#))

December 31:

274 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses raided in 2018 (average 22 per month)

2019**February:**

Danish citizen Dennis Christensen convicted and sentenced to six years in prison

February:

Seven men tortured in the city of Surgut

April 1:

Sergey Skrynnikov convicted and fined RUB 350,000

May 29:

Russia was informed by the United Nations Working Group Against Arbitrary Detention that the detention of Dmitriy Mikhaylov was arbitrary and that they strongly disagreed with Russia labeling, arresting, and detaining JW's in general as "extremists." Mikhaylov is the first of six cases regarding JW's that have been filed so far with the UN WGAD.

June:

216 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses were raided in the first six months of 2019 (average 36 per month); in just the first six months of 2019, on average, we have seen a 60% increase in home raids compared to 2018.

215 JW's facing criminal charges (in the six-month period since Putin's comments, the number nearly doubled compared to the previous 20 months (108))

July 4:

Alexandr Solovyev convicted and fined RUB 300,000

Siberian Jehovah's Witnesses harassed by officials

New searches and interrogations for faith in Krasnoyarsk, Quran confiscated

Stetson (17.07.2019) / JW in Russia (15.07.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2JFbVS5> - <https://bit.ly/30BSHIR> - On 9 and 11 July 2019, in Krasnoyarsk, searches were conducted in at least three apartments of citizens who are suspected of professing view of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Two persons were questioned about their religion. In one case, personnel of law enforcement agencies confiscated a Quran, thinking that it has significance for the criminal case.

In the evening of 9 July 2019, a group of investigators came with a search to the apartment of a family of believers. The agents confiscated from them telephones, computers, data storage devices, and notebooks with personal notes. At the same time, the agents let loose harsh jokes regarding the religion of the ones being searched. After the search, the head of the family was transported to the investigation department where he received a summons to an interrogation as a witness. On the same day yet another search was conducted in the home of a woman believer. In her apartment, electronic devices and religious books, including a Quran, were also seized. Tatyana was taken to the investigation department and questioned about her religious views. Two days later a search was conducted in yet another family.

A criminal case against Andrei Stupnikov has been dragging on in Krasnoyarsk since 3 July 2018. He has spent 241 days in a SIZO and at the present time he is under a prohibition on certain activities. In all, in Krasnoyarsk territory criminal prosecution for faith (in connection with Jehovah's Witnesses) is being carried out against three persons.

Background articles:

[One year after arrest, Jehovah's Witness suspect is freed](#)

July 3, 2018

[Actions against Jehovah's Witnesses in Krasnoyarsk territory](#)

April 23, 2019

[Jehovah's Witness nabbed as he tries to board plane](#)

July 3, 2018

[Russia Religion News Current News Items](#)

Tortured for beliefs, suspect torturers rewarded

Contrary to Russia's international legal obligations, no official responsible for the torture of either a Muslim following his 2015 arrest or seven Jehovah's Witnesses in 2019 has been arrested or put on criminal trial. One of the victims was re-arrested after reporting the torture, and two of the officials implicated have been given awards.

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (28.06.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2YISBZg> - Many people in Russia suffer torture, among them people held because they exercised their freedom of religion and belief.

Contrary to Russia's binding international legal obligations, no official responsible for the torture of either a Muslim in 2015 or seven Jehovah's Witnesses in 2019 has been arrested or put on criminal trial.

Under the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Russia is obliged to arrest and put on criminal trial any official suspected of torture or complicity in torture. Russia frequently does not do this. The UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) in 2018 condemned the impunity given to many officials who commit torture (see below).

A Muslim imprisoned for studying the works of Said Nursi was tortured during the nearly two years from 2015 that he spent awaiting trial in the Far Eastern Amur Region. Yevgeny Kim was tortured in "the so-called 'press hut', a special room where the necessary testimonies are beaten out [of inmates] by other detainees who are colluding with the prison administration", a fellow Muslim who wished to remain anonymous told Forum 18 in October 2017 (see below).

No official responsible for this torture appears to have been either arrested or put on criminal trial, and officials have not answered Forum 18's questions about action against those who tortured Kim (see below).

Seven Jehovah's Witnesses stated that they were tortured at the Investigative Committee building in Surgut after being arrested on 15 February 2019. When they refused to give any information on fellow believers, investigators subjected them to electric shocks, beatings, and attempted suffocation, and threatened them with sexual violence (see below).

After being released, one of the victims was re-arrested after he called the Investigative Committee's hotline to report his torture (see below).

Instead of being arrested and put on criminal trial, two of the officials implicated in the torture of the Jehovah's Witnesses were after the torture given awards, ostensibly for their work in 2018. Vladimir Yermolayev won "best local department head", and Sergei Bogodyorov took second place in the "best investigator" competition (see below).

After regional investigators twice refused to open a criminal case against colleagues who allegedly tortured Jehovah's Witnesses in custody in Surgut (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region), Russia's national Investigative Committee in Moscow has now taken over investigation of the detainees' claims. The national Ombudsperson for Human Rights, Tatyana Moskalkova, will monitor the process (see below).

It is unclear when the Investigative Committee in Moscow will complete its latest investigation of the Jehovah's Witnesses' torture or whether this will result in any redress for the victims. "It could last forever, until you and others have lost any interest in the subject," Jehovah's Witness lawyer Yegiazar Chernikov told Forum 18 on 26 June (see below).

"It is very unlikely that the Investigative Committee would initiate a criminal case against torturers who receive their salaries from the same pocket, but we will pursue the initiation of a criminal case, including, if necessary, in the international courts," Chernikov added (see below).

Surgut: Rewards for torturers

On 19 April, the Khanty Mansi Regional Investigative Committee announced on its website (well after the February torture of the Jehovah's Witnesses became public

knowledge) that Vladimir Yermolayev, head of its Surgut department, and investigator Sergei Bogodyorov – both implicated in the torture case – had received awards, ostensibly for their work in 2018.

Yermolayev won "best local department head" alongside his counterparts from the towns of Pyt-Yakh and Kogalym. Bogodyorov took second place in the "best investigator" competition.

Forum 18 wrote to the Khanty-Mansi Regional Investigative Committee on 27 June to ask why it had given awards to these investigators and why it had not both arrested them and opened a criminal case against them, given Russia's international obligations to act against torturers. Forum 18 has received no reply as of 28 June.

International obligations, torture widespread

The United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Russia (as the Soviet Union) ratified in 1987, defines torture as: "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity".

Under Article 6 of the Convention, Russia is obliged to arrest any person suspected on good grounds of having committed torture. Under Article 4, Russia is obliged to try them under criminal law which makes "these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature".

The UN Committee Against Torture's (CAT) August 2018 Concluding Observations (CAT/C/RUS/CO/6) on Russia stated: "The Committee is deeply concerned at numerous reliable reports of the practice of torture and ill-treatment in the State party, including as a means to extract confessions, and at many recent reports documenting cases of torture .. The Committee is also concerned at reports that allegations of torture rarely resulted in criminal prosecutions and that, even when prosecuted, the perpetrators were charged with simple assault or abuse of authority."

The UN CAT "urges the State party to combat impunity in torture and ill-treatment cases, including by ensuring that high-level government officials publicly and unambiguously affirm that torture will not be tolerated and that anyone committing acts of torture or complicit in or acquiescent to torture, including those with command responsibility, will be criminally prosecuted for torture."

The Committee made its remarks after video footage emerged of guards using truncheons to beat Yevgeny Makarov, an inmate at Yaroslavl's Correctional Colony No. 8, and pouring water over his head as he lay on a table.

There have been many other examples of abuse within Russia's law enforcement apparatus in recent years. In 2017, and again in early 2019, police in Chechnya detained without charge dozens of men they claimed were gay and subjected them to beatings and electric shocks, often with bags pulled over their heads (similarly to the Jehovah's Witnesses' accounts – see below). Five of the men are believed to have died as a result. Opposition activist Ildar Dadin, imprisoned in Correctional Colony No. 7 in Karelia between December 2015 and February 2017, has told of beatings, rape threats, and

being hung up by handcuffs by guards; in this case, former colony head Sergei Kossiyev himself received a two and half year prison sentence for the abuse.

Among other numerous well-documented incidents of torture carried out by state officials was that of Muslims in the North Caucasus.

One in 10 people who replied to a survey of 3,447 adults from across Russia said they had been tortured by state officials, according to a survey published on 27 June 2019 by independent Moscow-based polling body the Levada-Centre. Three-quarters of adults who said they had suffered torture stated that they had been tortured to humiliate or intimidate them, half that they had been tortured to extract confessions, and a third that they had been tortured as a punishment.

Blagoveshchensk: No arrest or prosecution of officials responsible for Muslim's torture

Yevgeny Lvovich Kim (born 5 October 1974) was jailed for three years and nine months in June 2017 for organising meetings in his home town of Blagoveshchensk to study the works of late Turkish theologian Said Nursi. He was convicted 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").

Between Kim's arrest in December 2015 and his transfer to a labour camp in August 2017, he was detained in Investigation Prison No. 1 in Blagoveshchensk. While there, he was tortured, had his ribs broken, and suffered attempted rape. This took place in "the so-called 'press hut', a special room where the necessary testimonies are beaten out [of inmates] by other detainees who are colluding with the prison administration", a fellow Muslim who wished to remain anonymous told Forum 18 in October 2017.

Forum 18 wrote to the Human Rights Ombudsperson for Amur Region, Lyubov Khashcheva, to ask whether she or the regional prosecutor's office had ever opened a criminal case connected with Kim's torture in pre-trial detention. Khashcheva replied on 19 June that her office had no information about Kim's time in pre-trial detention.

Forum 18 also asked the Amur Region Prosecutor's Office on 18 June whether prosecutors had opened any criminal case against officials and others in Investigation Prison No. 1 responsible for Kim's torture. Yuliya Adusheva, head of the Press Service, replied on 27 June that the Prosecutor's office had received no reports of Kim's torture and had not initiated any investigation or criminal case.

Forum 18 also sent a written request for information to the Federal Prison Service (FSIN) in Moscow on 19 June, asking whether it had received any reports on Kim's torture, whether any criminal case had been opened against Investigation Prison No. 1 or any individual, and whether any other measures had been taken. Forum 18 has received no reply as of 28 June.

Kim served his sentence in Khabarovsk's No. 3 Labour Camp, where conditions were "better", according to a fellow Muslim who was following the case.

Kim was released on 10 April 2019, but was deprived of his Russian citizenship, left stateless, and – on the day he completed his prison term – fined and ordered deported to his country of birth.

The official reason for his deprivation of citizenship was that he did not have the correct documents – which officials had confiscated the day before the court decision. This appears to be the first time anyone has been stripped of citizenship after being convicted under Russia's harsh anti-"extremism" laws for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Kim is now in a temporary detention centre for foreign nationals, awaiting deportation to Uzbekistan - his country of birth - a serious violator of freedom of religion and belief.

Surgut tortures

The seven Surgut Jehovah's Witnesses – Sergei Loginov, Kirill Severinchik, Vyacheslav Boronos, Sergei Volosnikov, Artyom Kim, Aleksei Plekhov, and Yevgeny Kayrak – were among at least 15 people taken in for interrogation early in the morning of 15 February 2019. Most were released after questioning, and went immediately to have their injuries documented by doctors.

Loginov was re-arrested shortly after he called the Investigative Committee's hotline to report his torture. After 56 days in custody, he was released under specific restrictions on 11 April (not allowed to go out at night, communicate with others involved in the case, or use the telephone, internet, or post).

Investigators went to court to have two other Jehovah's Witnesses, Artur Severinchik and Yevgeny Fedin also placed in pre-trial detention, but judges later ordered that they be released. They left custody on 15 March and 11 April respectively. Fedin is also under specific restrictions, while Artur Severinchik appears to be under no restrictions at present.

"On our initiative, independent medical checks for bodily harm were carried out on my [clients]," Jehovah's Witness lawyer Yegiazar Chernikov told Forum 18 on 26 June. "According to the findings of the medical report, multiple injuries were identified in the form of bruises, haematomas, abrasions, and burns from an electric shock prod, which by their stage coincided with the date of interrogation."

Doctors were initially reluctant to attest in writing to the Jehovah's Witnesses' injuries, but after the intervention of regional Khanty-Mansi Human Rights Ombudsperson Natalya Strebkova (see below), they became willing to issue documentation, Jehovah's Witness lawyer Dmitry Kolobov told BBC Russia on 27 February.

Several of the victims gave video testimony of the torture in March. Lev Ponomaryov, a researcher at the Moscow-based human rights group Memorial, posted photographs on the Ekho Moskvy radio station's website which show heavy bruising to a man's legs and ribcage, and what appear to be the marks of electric shocks on a man's arm.

Investigators questioned the Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the torture: "Where are Jehovah's Witness meetings held? Who attends the meetings? What are the elders' names? What is your mobile phone password?"

In his 21 February appeal to Human Rights Ombudsperson Moskalkova, seen by Forum 18, Artyom Kim describes being taken to a room "similar to a toilet", where a black bag was put over his head and fastened with sticky tape and his hands were also taped together. He was hit and kicked for about twenty minutes as he lay on the floor. Investigators then administered electric shocks to his legs and arms, periodically pouring water over them.

Kim suffered "extreme pain", and "loudly cried out, for which they struck me in the head". They then removed his trousers and underwear and threatened him with rape, before going back to giving him shocks to his legs and "each finger individually". "After that," Kim wrote, "I agreed to give testimony."

Thereafter, whenever Kim refused or was unable to give them the information they wanted, the abuse and threats resumed. He eventually made a statement in the presence of a state-appointed lawyer, and was released under travel restrictions in the early hours of the following morning.

In their 21 February appeals to Moskalkova, also seen by Forum 18, Vyacheslav Boronos and Kirill Severinchik describe similar experiences of being hooded with taped-up plastic bags, beaten, and given electric shocks, after which they too gave and signed statements in the presence of lawyers. Severinchik also mentioned being able to hear from the corridor the sound of blows and electrical discharge, and recognising the voices of several fellow believers as they cried out.

Will federal-level investigation lead to arrests and successful prosecutions?

It took a week after the torture occurred for the regional Khanty-Mansi Investigative Committee to announce its initial internal investigation (on 22 February). The Investigative Committee initially denied that any violence had taken place. After lawyers made public the results of their clients' medical examinations, it claimed that the detainees had injured themselves. Later, it insisted that the Jehovah's Witnesses' "active resistance" to the National Guard and FSB security service officials who had arrested them had resulted in "insignificant injuries".

Regional Human Rights Ombudsperson Strebkova met both investigators and victims on 25 February and lodged her findings with the Regional Prosecutor's Office. "I confess, what these people told me at the meeting, all these terrible details, it all shocked me," Strebkova told the znak.com news website the same day. Strebkova stated that the Khanty-Mansi Regional Investigative Committee had twice investigated the staff of its Surgut branch and twice decided that no crime had been committed. The Khanty-Mansi Regional Prosecutor's Office in turn twice rejected the legality of the Regional Investigative Committee's refusal to open a criminal case.

In mid-June, national Human Rights Ombudsperson Tatyana Moskalkova visited the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region. She met local law enforcement officials and the Jehovah's Witnesses. "The citizens told her everything that they had previously told me," regional Human Rights Ombudsperson Strebkova told the znak.com news website on 14 June.

Strebkova also stated that "the materials of the examinations [of the investigators' conduct] and statements [by the Jehovah's Witnesses] will be transferred to Moscow to the Investigative Committee of Russia."

"The federal Investigative Committee requested the materials of the investigation apparently so as not to force lower-ranking investigators of the same body to open a criminal case against their colleagues," Jehovah's Witness lawyer Yegiazar Chernikov commented to Forum 18 on 26 June.

It is unclear when the Investigative Committee in Moscow will complete its latest investigation of the Jehovah's Witnesses' torture or whether this will result in any redress for the victims. "It could last forever, until you and others have lost any interest in the subject," Chernikov told Forum 18.

"It is very unlikely that the Investigative Committee would initiate a criminal case against torturers who receive their salaries from the same pocket, but we will pursue the initiation of a criminal case, including, if necessary, in the international courts," Chernikov added.

"Mostly, they need to make sure how to more reliably 'protect their own'," he continued. "If the Investigative Committee wanted to comply with the law and its own regulations, it was obliged to initiate a criminal case for causing bodily harm already in the early stages of the inspection, but since they continue to 'carry out an examination', this means a path of delays and red tape. They use gaps in the law to bury the case gradually through 'refusal' and 'cancellation', and damage the rights and freedoms of the victims."

None of the Khanty-Mansi Regional Investigative Committee, the Khanty-Mansi Regional Prosecutor's Office, or the Federal Investigative Committee in Moscow has yet answered Forum 18's questions about the case, sent on 7 June. Forum 18 wrote again on 18 June to the Federal Investigative Committee, after it became known that it had taken over the case. Forum 18 has received no answers to the questions as of 28 June.

Forum 18 wrote to national Human Rights Ombudsperson Moskalkova's office to ask when the federal-level Investigative Committee is likely to complete its investigation, how likely it is that a criminal case will be opened as a result, what will happen next if the Investigative Committee refuses to prosecute the alleged torturers, and how it can be ensured that others will not suffer similar treatment during interrogation and detention. Moskalkova's office told Forum 18 she was away until 7 July and would not respond to the questions in her absence.

The seven Surgut Jehovah's Witnesses who were tortured are still being investigated under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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").

Surgut: European Court of Human Rights appeal

On 26 February, nine of the Jehovah's Witnesses – including the seven torture victims – lodged an appeal at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (Loginov and Others versus Russia, Application No. 10618/19 – brief details available here). In response, the ECtHR urgently ordered the Russian government to have Loginov (the only torture victim in detention at that point) sent for an independent medical assessment.

On 18 March, the Russian government responded to the ECtHR that Loginov suffered from no ailments which would prevent his detention. The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses claimed, however, that no independent checks for evidence of torture had been carried out; according to his lawyer, Loginov was only checked over by a prison service medic through his cell bars, and at a hospital only on 5 March, 18 days after the torture, when burns and bruises would have faded.

Surgut: Call for investigators' removal, prosecution

On 20 February, lawyer Dmitry Kolobov requested the removal from the criminal case against the Jehovah's Witnesses of Vladimir Yermolayev (head of the Surgut Investigative Committee) and investigators Stepan Tkach, Azat Adiyatulin, Stanislav Gaysin, Sergei Bogodyorov and Dmitry Asmolov.

The lawyer asked for their removal "because, in connection with these circumstances [the torture], these officials are not able to conduct objectively a preliminary

investigation of this criminal case". Yermolayev refused this request, Kolobov told BBC Russian on 27 February.

On 25 February, Andrey Babushkin, a member of the Presidential Human Rights Council and chair of the Commission to Support Public Monitoring Commissions, demanded an end to the violent treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Surgut. In a statement to the General Prosecutor's Office, the head of the Investigative Committee, and the Public Monitoring Commission for the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, he insisted that a criminal case be opened against the investigators responsible under Criminal Code Articles 210 ("Organisation of criminal activity") and 286.3 ("Exceeding official powers").

The UN Committee Against Torture's (CAT) August 2018 Concluding Observations (CAT/C/RUS/CO/6) on Russia stated: "The Committee is also concerned at reports that allegations of torture rarely resulted in criminal prosecutions and that, even when prosecuted, the perpetrators were charged with simple assault or abuse of authority."

The UN CAT urged Russia to ensure that "anyone committing acts of torture or complicit in or acquiescent to torture, including those with command responsibility, will be criminally prosecuted for torture."

Human Rights Ombudsperson comments on Jehovah's Witness jailing

More than 200 Jehovah's Witnesses are now facing prosecution in 38 of Russia's 83 federal subjects (not counting Crimea and Sevastopol). Thirty-eight are believed to be in pre-trial detention and 30 under house arrest. The rest are under travel restrictions, a specific set of restrictions (such as not being allowed to leave their homes at night), or no known restrictions at all.

Investigators have completed the cases against seven people – in Kostroma, Tomsk, Polyarny in Murmansk Region, Primorye and Vladivostok – and they are believed to be close to coming to trial.

On 10 June 2019, federal Human Rights Ombudsperson Tatyana Moskalkova delivered her 2018 report to President Vladimir Putin, which included remarks on the Jehovah's Witnesses' situation:

"These events [the conviction and imprisonment of Danish citizen Dennis Christensen] raise questions about the existence of a conflict between the constitutional right to practice one's religion individually or jointly with others, and the signs of extremist activity specified in Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation".

A Jehovah's Witness sentenced to a heavy fine for worshipping

217 JW are currently facing criminal charges

HRWF (05.07.2019) - On 4 July, the Ordzhonikidzevskiy District Court in Perm imposed a fine of 300,000 RUB (\$4,734) on Aleksandr Solovyev, a Jehovah's Witness, for participating in a religious service of his religious movement which was banned as an extremist organization by the Russian authorities two years ago. The prosecution had requested a 3.5-yr prison sentence. Attorneys representing Aleksandr plan to appeal the

conviction. They have also filed an application with the United Nations Working Group Against Arbitrary Detention.

He is the third Jehovah's Witness to be convicted under Russian Criminal Code Article 282.2 (Organizing the activity of an extremist organization).

Background | Aleksandr Solovyev

Aleksandr was arrested on the evening of May 22, 2018, at a railway station, when he and his wife Anna were arriving home from a trip abroad. Police officers handcuffed Aleksandr and took him to a temporary detention center. Anna was also taken away by the police but in a separate vehicle. Officers searched their apartment all night and seized photographs, electronic devices, and a collection of Bibles.

After some questioning, Anna was released without any charges filed. However, a criminal case was initiated against Aleksandr and on May 24 he was placed under house arrest until November 19, 2018. Since then, while awaiting trial, he had had to comply with certain restrictions on his activities.

As of July 1, 2019

217 JWs were facing criminal charges
40 being held in detention
25 under house arrest

Case of Solovyev in Perm

Region: Perm Territory

Locality: Perm

Case number: 11802570030000021

Accused of: Participating in religious services, which is interpreted as taking part in the activity of an extremist organisation (with reference to the decision of the Russian Supreme Court on the liquidation of all 396 registered organisations of Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017)

Article of the Russian Criminal Code: 282.2 (2)

Investigating: Investigative Directorate of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Perm Territory

Case initiated: 22 May 2018

Six Jehovah's Witnesses criminally indicted in Penza

Investigation completed in criminal case against organizer and members of Jehovah's witnesses extremist organization

Russia Religion News (01.07.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2XI1NQk> - The first department for investigation of especially serious cases of the district Investigative Committee (S.K.R.) has completed the investigation of a criminal case on the charge against a resident of Penza (born 1964) based on part 1 of article 282.2 of the CC RF (arranging the activity of an extremist organization) and against five persons based on part 2 of article 282.2 of the CC RF (participation in the activity of an extremist organization). The criminal case was investigated with the cooperation of personnel of the regional Investigative Committee and the Center for Combating Extremism of the directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for Penza oblast.

According to the investigation, a resident of Penza (born 1964), who knew reliably that the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, "Arbekovo. Penza," had been ruled to be extremist in accordance with the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of 20 April 2017, which has taken legal effect, and that its activity had been banned and the organization itself was supposed to be liquidated, from July 2017 to July 2018 undertook active steps of an organizational character intended to continue the illegal activity of the aforementioned religious cell. He arranged meetings, religious speeches and worship services, collection of financial means in the form of donations (more than 131 thousand rubles were collected), involved members in its activity, and carried out the disposition of the organization's property. This organization preached the superiority of adherents of the religious teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses over other persons and a negative assessment of persons who are not adherents of this teaching, encouraged the breaking off of kinship and familial relations with them, urged the refusal of medical intervention including urgent indicators for removing threats to human life, and the non-recognition of bodies of government and local administration. The religious organization carried out its activity using conspiratorial measures.

Five residents of Penza (three men and two women), from 35 to 55 years of age, participated in the activity of the Jehovah's Witnesses extremist organization, undertaking active steps aimed at the continuation of its illegal activity: they participated in religious meetings and a congress, provided their residences for conducting religious events, and engaged in preaching activity.

During the course of the investigation, the organizer and three members of the extremist organization were under house arrest, by court order, and another two members received a measure of restriction not involving limitation of liberty.

At the present time, the criminal case with an indictment approved by an associate prosecutor of the oblast has been sent to a court for consideration on the merits.

Putin touts Christianity. So why is Russia persecuting Christians?

Washington Post (06.06.2019) - <https://wapo.st/303aNgj> - Russian President Vladimir Putin has told interviewers he wears an Orthodox Church baptismal cross pendant, given to him by his mother. In his annual address to the Federal Assembly in 2014, Putin declared, "Christianity was a powerful spiritual unifying force . . . in the creation of a Russian nation and Russian state." He added, "It was thanks to this spiritual unity that our forefathers for the first time and forevermore saw themselves as a united nation."

Although Mr. Putin was once an officer of the KGB, devoted to defending the atheist Soviet Union, as the leader of Russia he has embraced religious values and symbols, especially the Russian Orthodox Church. Russian law confers official status on Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, as well as Christianity. Russia's Constitution of 1993 declared, "Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with other any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them."

But all of these commitments and devotions seem to collapse in today's Russia when it comes to Jehovah's Witnesses. In April 2017, the Russian Supreme Court ruled that Jehovah's Witnesses should be labeled an extremist organization. Ever since, members have been prosecuted as criminals when their only action was to celebrate their faith. Even Mr. Putin has expressed puzzlement, saying last December that "Jehovah's

Witnesses are Christians, too. I don't quite understand why they are persecuted. So this should be looked into. This must be done."

Nothing has been "looked into," and the persecution continues. The latest example is a court decision in May to uphold a six-year prison term for Jehovah's Witness member Dennis Christensen, who was sentenced in February in the city of Oryol, south of Moscow. The Russian security services tapped his phone and put him under surveillance. He was detained in May 2017 after a police raid on his congregation. All told, 207 Jehovah's Witnesses are now facing criminal prosecution in Russia for their faith, and detentions are continuing, including in recent days in Makhachkala and Sevastopol. Jehovah's Witnesses refuse military service, do not vote and view God as the only true leader. Jehovah's Witnesses are not violent, extremist or criminal.

Mr. Christensen told the court, before his appeal was denied, "What is being done against me and other Witnesses here in Russia are false accusations of extremism, interrogations, detentions, searches, seizures . . . threats and now torture." He added, "I have a clear conscience, I have done nothing wrong. I have not violated any Russian law, and I have nothing to be ashamed of."

How does Mr. Putin square his statement last year with the reality that his security services continue to imprison people for their faith? It is time for Russia to let believers out of jail.

Actions against Jehovah's Witnesses in south of Russia

Court in Rostov-on-Don restricts liberty of five Jehovah's Witnesses

Russian Religious News (13 June 2019) - <http://bit.ly/2Nbxqh5> - Three Jehovah's Witnesses, arrested after searches in Rostov-on-Don, were placed in custody and another two are under house arrest. The detained believers were placed in a room with murderers, their attorney reported. The cases of Jehovah's Witnesses force one to consider clarification of the indicators of extremism, ombudsman Tatiana Moskalkova notes in her report.

As Kavkazskii Uzel reported, early in the morning of 22 May searches were conducted in several apartments of Jehovah's Witnesses in Rostov-on-Don, and some believers were arrested.

Among the detainees of 22 May in Rostov-on-Don were 51-year-old Alexander Parkov, 35-year-old Arsen Avanesov, and his 66-year-old father, Vilen Avanesov. The court ordered all three placed in custody for two months. In the morning of 10 June, 32-year-old Ruslan Alyev and 22-year-old Semen Baibak were arrested in their homes in Rostov-on-Don. On 11 June, the court assigned for both a measure of restriction in the form of house arrest.

Parkov and the Avanesovs were arrested on 24 and 26 May and they were charged on the basis of part 1 of article 282.2 of the CC RF (arranging the activity of an extremist organization), reported Alena Borodina, an attorney who joined the case at the stage of appeal of the measure of restraint.

Borodina noted also that the condition of the Avanesov father and son leaves much to be desired. "They are both hypertensive and the father has heart disease. Their illnesses are

included (they are not included—clarification of Kavkazskii Uzel) in the list of diseases for which they might be released from detention," the lawyer thinks.

She said that there were no other complaints of illegal actions, if one does not consider the fact that searches were conducted in the homes of all subjects at six o'clock in the morning. "At the same time, the reports of the search and arrest state that all these people were detained at the site of the commission of a crime, while they actually were taken out of bed," Alena Borodina added.

The day after the arrest, 23 May, Vilen and Arsen Avanesov, as well as Alexander Parkov, described how appointed lawyers put pressure on them (Kavkazskii Uzel addition—security forces put pressure on all detainees. The appointed lawyer put pressure on Arsen Avanesov only, attorney Alena Borodina clarified), urging them to admit their guilt and cooperate with the investigation, in order to receive a measure of restriction not involving imprisonment, Alena Borodina reported.

"They put pressure on everybody. Vilen Avanesov was so sure that he would be released, he did not doubt for a minute. And in the court of appeal, when he delivered his defense speech, he pointed out that he is a peaceful person and he never hurt anybody in his life. He asked, why is he here? Now they (the Avanesovs and Parkov) are sitting in the SIZO along with murderers," Alena Borodina described.

She said that originally Vilen was placed in a room where six persons were held, Arsen had 12 cellmates, and Parkov did not go to the SIZO. "They are now in a special chamber, two persons each, "serious ones" (those who are held on serious articles) are always together, those on whom a 'dozen' shines," the lawyer noted.

She thinks the situation is absurd where believing people are placed behind bars for the fact that they met together, prayed, and sang songs.

"From the materials of the case it transpires that for a whole year the believers were under surveillance—wiretapping of telephone conversations and other operational search activities. As it turned out, utilities workers came to all their houses and most likely they installed a wiretap in the house," Alena Borodina described.

She said that in the case against Parkov and the Avanesovs there is information about other believers in whose homes searches were conducted in May and June of this year. "But I do not know whether they will be a single joint case. These three were arrested back on 22 May. But according to my information there were 21 searches in all among Jehovah's Witnesses. They made Arsen Avanesov the main subject. He and his father and Parkov are in custody. And the two in whose home there was a recent search—Alyev and Baibak—are under house arrest. But, judging by the investigator's words, the appetite of the investigation is growing, and they intend to involve some more," Alena Borodina said.

Ruslan Alyev will not appeal the decision regarding house arrest.

There were no procedural violations noted in the original detention and subsequent actions with respect to Ruslan Alyev, lawyer Roman Kakusev, who concluded an agreement with the Alyev family, noted. He said no appeal against the selection of a measure of restriction will be attempted.

"We will not appeal because my client agrees with the measure of restriction. It depends largely on the position of the investigator. The investigator himself filed a petition that was for house arrest," Roman Kakusev described for a Kavkazskii Uzel correspondent. He

noted at the same time that it would be difficult under these circumstances to get a signed pledge not to depart.

At the present time, the lawyer said, Alyev's case is being investigated separately from the other cases of Jehovah's Witnesses. "He is the only defendant in his case. According to the Criminal Procedural Code, the accusation must be presented within ten days, if there is one," Roman Kakusev pointed out.

He also noted that he does not possess any information about what investigative actions the investigator plans.

Ruslan Alyev's wife, Kristina, also confirmed for a Kavkazskii Uzel correspondent that there had not been any clear violations and force against her husband or herself on the part of security forces. At the same time, the woman refused to give detailed information about her husband and the circumstances of the search and arrest, noting only that Ruslan Alyev is under house arrest in his place of residence.

Investigator Mikhail Antipov refused to tell a Kavkazskii Uzel correspondent about the course of his investigations in cases against Jehovah's Witnesses. "I do not have the right to comment on anything," he declared.

Moskalkova voiced Jehovah's Witnesses' complaints

Appeals to the commissioner for human rights in Russia in 2018 showed that after the liquidation of divisions of Jehovah's Witnesses, believers found themselves deprived of rights to religious liberty, Tatiana Moskalovkova's states in her report, which she presented to President Vladimir Putin on 10 June. On 11 June the report was published in Rossiiskaia Gazeta.

Incidents involving followers of Jehovah's Witnesses force one to consider the necessity of clarifying the indicators of extremist activity specified in article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the RF, this report notes.

"Without doubt, any extremist activity is impermissible, but also impermissible are the vague criteria categorizing religious materials as extremist when in fact any federal judge, on the basis of his own consideration, can prohibit any book, image, video, or audio tape," Moskalkova declares.

In the opinion of the ombudsman, to strengthen the guarantees of the rights of citizens there are needed strict legislative, and not judgment-related, criteria expanding the administrative and judicial consideration and permitting the recognition of any materials and convictions as extremist.

At the same time, the ombudsman's report also mentions complaints about "persistent missionary activity of Jehovah's Witnesses." Noting that devotees of Jehovah's Witnesses should not infringe the rights of other people, the ombudsman declares that they should not be prosecuted on subjective bases.

Earlier Kavkazskii Uzel has reported about the arrests in late May of Jehovah's Witnesses in Volgograd and several of the detainees were held in custody. On 6 June, the FSB declared that security forces in Dagestan halted the activity of 15 cells of Jehovah's Witnesses. According to security agents, the detainees put pressure on adherents because of group study of extremist literature.

Action against Jehovah's Witnesses in south of Russia: three men and one women arrested

[Link for news in Russian](#)

Russia Religion News (03.06.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2WDuGwz> - On 3 June 2019, the Soviet district court of Makhachkala sent to the SIZO for two months 40-year-old Arsen Abdullaev, 38-year-old Maria Karpova, 34-year-old Anton Dergalev, and 27-year-old Marat Abdulgaliyev. Two days earlier, on 1 June 2019, in Makhachkala, Kaspiisk, Kizliar and Derbent, personnel of the FSB in masks and bullet-proof vests and armed with automatic weapons burst into approximately ten homes of law-abiding local residents, who are accused of professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses.

During the invasion into the apartment of the Abdullaevs, troops forced the head of the family onto the floor, face down, and his wife and son were blockaded in a room. They were informed of the warrant for the search and in the corridor two brochures of religious contents, which somebody from the raiding party had planted, were "discovered." After this, without being allowed to take food, Arsen and his wife, Suat, were taken for interrogation in the E ["Extremism"] Center and later to the republican directorate of the FSB, where they were interrogated until the evening. The operation was directed by an FSB investigator who was called Ivan Emelianov.

During questioning, the married couple was informed orally that they both were suspected under the article on "planning the activity of an extremist organization," Arsen as the "organizer," and Suat as a "participant." The investigator suggested to Arsen that he acknowledge his guilt, but when the latter said that he had nothing to acknowledge, the investigator declared: "Then there will consequences." After this, Arsen was placed in detention.

Dagestan has become the 39th region of Russia where similar criminal cases have been initiated against Jehovah's Witnesses. . . .

Jehovah's Witness criminal cases – list

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (31.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2HYzJPG> - As of today (31 May) at least 189 Jehovah's Witnesses across Russia face criminal prosecution for exercising their freedom of religion or belief on "extremism"-related charges, which they resolutely deny. The majority are in detention, under house arrest, or under travel restrictions. Armed raids continue on Jehovah's Witness homes, and some people have been arrested at their workplaces.

The cases against four of these individuals (in Tomsk, Polyarny in Murmansk Region and Primorye) have already been completed and in late May were handed to court for trial (see below).

The number of individuals facing criminal prosecution has been steadily rising. In September 2018 it had reached about 70. In February 2019 126 Jehovah's Witnesses were facing criminal prosecutions, the majority of whom were in detention, under house arrest, or under travel restrictions.

40 women, 149 men, aged from 19 to 84

The at least 40 female and 149 male Jehovah's Witnesses all face possible prosecution under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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"), or Part 1.1 ("Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation"), as well as Criminal Code Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing of extremist activity").

The oldest and youngest facing criminal charges were born almost exactly 65 years apart. Yelena Zayshchuk, born in August 1934, is 84. Grigory Ozhiganov, born in August 1999, is 19.

Of the 189 individuals known to be facing criminal prosecution:

- 29 people (3 women, 26 men) are in pre-trial detention;
- 2 people (both men) were ordered placed in pre-trial detention and are now wanted;
- 28 people (4 women, 24 men) are under house arrest;
- 73 people (26 women, 47 men) are under travel restrictions;
- 16 people (1 woman, 15 men) are under specific sets of restrictions (such as not being allowed to go out at night or use the telephone or internet);
- 5 people (1 woman, 4 men) are under an obligation to appear before investigators promptly when summoned;
- 36 people (5 women, 31 men) appear to be under no restrictions.

Officials have had 74 of these 189 individuals added to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose assets banks are obliged to freeze, except for small transactions. (Two already convicted, Dennis Christensen and Sergei Skrynnikov, also appear on the List.) Individuals do not need to have been convicted of any crime to be added to the list.

Six people are on the Interior Ministry's federal wanted list as their whereabouts are unknown. Two are known to have left Russia.

The Russian authorities have also opened criminal cases against three Jehovah's Witnesses in Russian-occupied Crimea. Sergei Filatov and Artyom Gerasimov have been charged, while Taras Kuzio is a suspect.

Investigations follow 2017 Supreme Court ban

The investigations are a direct result of the Supreme Court's 2017 ban on Jehovah's Witness activity throughout the country, and its decision to declare the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre and all 395 local communities "extremist organisations". No cases stemming from the nationwide ban have yet come to trial, although several investigations have recently been completed and two trials appear imminent.

The registered Jehovah's Witness organisation in Oryol was earlier ruled "extremist" and ordered liquidated in June 2016. Stemming from that ban on 23 May 2019 Danish Citizen Dennis Christensen jailing for six years under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 was upheld by Oryol Appeal Court.

The prosecution stemming from the Oryol ban of Jehovah's Witness Sergei Skrynnikov which on 1 April 2019 led to him being fined of about a year and a half's average local wages under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2. Skrynnikov's appeal is due to be heard on 13 June.

In a case launched in June 2016 before the nationwide ban, in December 2018 Arkadya Akopyan, was initially found guilty under Criminal Code 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") for allegedly giving "extremist" sermons and giving out banned literature. The prosecution produced apparently false witnesses in the case. But Akopyan was later acquitted in connection with the partial decriminalisation of this offence.

Trial underway, three more trials imminent

Yury Zalipayev, remains on trial under Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1 ("Public calls for extremist activity") for allegedly distributing material "inciting hatred and enmity towards a social group, 'Christian clergy'", but Jehovah's Witnesses insist that these materials were planted by FSB security service officers during a search.

The criminal case against Sergei Klimov in Tomsk was handed to October District Court in late May. The Court told Forum 18 on 31 May that no date has yet been set for his trial to begin.

The case against two men from Polyarny in Murmansk Region - Roman Markin and Viktor Trofimov – who were interrogated at the Investigative Department of the Russian Navy's Northern Fleet's Polyarny Flotilla was handed to Polyarny District Court in late May. The Court told Forum 18 on 31 May that no date has yet been set for their trial to begin.

The case against Grigory Bubnov in Volno-Nadezhdinskoye in Primorye was handed to Nadezhdinsky District Court on 31 May. The Court told Forum 18 that no date has yet been set for his trial to begin.

Nationwide raids

Stemming from the 2017 nationwide ban, the authorities have from January 2018 onwards intensively raided Jehovah's Witness homes across Russia, continuing less frequent raids that took place before Jehovah's Witnesses were banned.

Between January 2018 and May 2019, raids have taken place in the following 36 of Russia's 83 federal subjects (not counting Crimea and Sevastopol): Amur, Arkhangelsk, Republic of Bashkortostan, Belgorod, Ivanovo, Jewish Autonomous Region, Kamchatka, Kemerovo, Khabarovsk, Republic of Khakasiya, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, Kirov, Kostroma, Krasnoyarsk, Magadan, Republic of Mordoviya, Murmansk, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Oryol, Penza, Perm, Primorye, Pskov, Rostov, Republic of Sakha-Yakutiya, Sakhalin, Saratov, Smolensk, Stavropol, Sverdlovsk, Republic of Tatarstan, Tomsk, Ulyanovsk, and Volgograd.

Seven Jehovah's Witnesses detained in Surgut in February 2019 were tortured. Yet against Russia's legally binding international obligations under the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment no arrests or prosecutions of the officials responsible have yet happened. Similarly, no arrests or prosecutions of the officials who tortured Muslim prisoner of conscience Yevgeny Kim, or those who facilitated this, are known to have happened. However, Kim himself was deprived of his Russian citizenship, leaving him stateless, and on 10 April 2019 – the day he completed his labour camp term – was fined and ordered deported to his country of birth

Despite the Jehovah's Witnesses being doctrinally pacifist, the raids often involve heavily armed riot police or National Guard troops carrying machine guns. The raids are usually

led by the Investigative Committee, with the FSB security service and police Centre for Combating Extremism also often participating.

The usual pattern for a raid is that officials, including armed men in masks and body armour, late at night or early in the morning arrive at Jehovah's Witnesses' homes. The occupants are sometimes made to lie on the floor or face the wall while the officers search their homes.

"We quickly got dressed, opened the door, and in a second the apartment was filled with men in black. I was just shocked," Svetlana Suvorkova, whose husband Yevgeny was arrested in Kirov in October 2018, told the jw-russia website on 11 January 2019. Suvorkov is now under house arrest.

Officials then confiscate personal possessions such as electronic devices, bank cards, personal photographs, and books. After this the Jehovah's Witnesses, including children and elderly people, are normally taken to one of the raiding agencies' buildings for questioning lasting several hours.

Detention, house arrest, travel restrictions

Most people are then released, some under travel restrictions. Others are kept in temporary detention until investigators decide whether to apply to a court for longer-term restrictive measures – they must do this within 48 hours of the initial detention.

A judge then decides whether to grant an investigator's request to place an individual in detention, under house arrest, or under travel or other restrictions.

House arrest means that an individual must remain within their home, possibly with other court-ordered restrictions, unless there is a medical reason to have treatment outside their home.

An initial period of pre-trial detention or house arrest lasts for two months from the date of arrest. Criminal cases are usually opened on or shortly before the date of the raid. Towards the end of the two months, investigators must apply to a court again if they want an extension. Detainees themselves may appeal to a higher court to have these restrictive measures lifted or reduced. Sometimes such appeals have been successful.

Detentions can be difficult for relatives to cope with, both practically and emotionally. Maksim Khalturin's father has health problems and relies largely on his support, the jw-russia.org website stated on 11 January 2019. "It is very hard for me without him. After all, I must take care of my husband alone. And I myself am 81 years old," said his mother Galina Khalturina. "For the first week I couldn't sleep at all," said Olga Korobeynikova, whose husband Vladimir is now under house arrest in Kirov. "When I wake up, there's just pain."

Prosecutions despite Supreme Court claims

Prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses are happening despite the Supreme Court's insistence when they issued the ruling that it "does not amount to prohibition of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses as such", and despite the fact that the Russian government has twice claimed that the ban "does not contain a restriction or prohibition on individual profession of [Jehovah's Witness] teachings".

Jehovah's Witnesses point out that the Supreme Court judges' claims are not reflected in reality. "Today it has become clear that the statements of the Russian authorities before

international bodies that the liquidation of Jehovah's Witness legal entities 'do not contain any restriction or prohibition on practicing these teachings' is nothing more than slyness," spokesperson Yaroslav Sivulsky commented on 23 May. "In order to convict a person for extremism and an attempt on the constitutional order, and then punish him on a par with thieves and murderers, it is enough for law enforcement authorities to prove that he believes in God in the wrong way and catch him reading the Bible."

Muslims who study the works of the late Muslim theologian Said Nursi face similar "extremism"-related prosecutions. In what appears to be a first, Yevgeny Kim, arrested in 2015 and convicted in 2017 for meeting with others to study Nursi's books, was deprived of his Russian citizenship, leaving him stateless, and on 10 April 2019 – the day he completed his prison term – was fined and ordered deported to his country of birth Uzbekistan.

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Full list of 189 under criminal investigation, sentenced or on trial

Name, date of birth – date of initial arrest; date of decision to put in detention/under house arrest/under travel restrictions; charged/suspect under Criminal Code Article; whether or not on Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists"

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- Pre-trial Detention

Ivanovo - Furmanovo

1) Yevgeny Andreyevich Spirin, born 24 February 1986 – arrested on 27 January 2019; detained on 28 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kemerovo

2) Sergey Alekseyevich Britvin, born 18 August 1965 – arrested on 22 July 2018; detained on 24 July 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 November 2018

3) Vadim Anatolyevich Levchuk, born 6 February 1972 – arrested on 22 July 2018; detained on 24 July 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 November 2018

Khabarovsk

4) Valery Vasilyevich Moskalenko, born 15 April 1967 – arrested on 2 August 2018; detained on 3 August 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kirov

5) Andrzej [Anatolyevich] Oniszczyk, Polish citizen, born 3 October 1968 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained 12 October 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

Krasnoyarsk – Sharypovo

6) Anton Olegovich Ostapenko, born 1991 – arrested on 19 April 2019; detained on 24 April 2019 for two months; Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Mordoviya – Saransk

7) Aleksandr Stanislavovich Shevchuk, born 31 August 1989 – arrested on 6 February 2019; detained no later than 8 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 April 2019

Novosibirsk

8) Yury Prokopyevich Savelyov, born 1 January 1954 – arrested on 8 November 2018; detained on 8 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 18 December 2018

Primorye – Spassk-Dalny

9) Yury Nikolayevich Belosludtsev, born 1 May 1964 – arrested on 17 March 2019 in Luchegorsk; detained on 19 March 2019 for two months; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

10) Sergei Aleksandrovich Sergeev, born 6 September 1955 – arrested on 17 March 2019 in Luchegorsk; detained on 19 March 2019 for two months; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Primorye – Vladivostok

11) Dmitry Viktorovich Barmakin, born 30 May 1974 – arrested in Nakhodka on 28 July 2018; detained on 30 July 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

12) Irina Gennadyevna Buglak, born 25 January 1975 – arrested in Partizansk on 19 April 2019; detained on 20 April 2019 for two months; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Rostov-on-Don

13) Arsen Vilenovich Avanesov, born 24 September 1983 – arrested on 22 May 2019; detained on 26 May 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

14) Vilen Shagenovich Avanesov, born 22 October 1952 – arrested on 22 May 2019; detained on 26 May 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

15) Aleksandr Mikhailovich Parkov, born 5 September 1967 – arrested on 22 May 2019; detained on 26 May 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Smolensk

16) Yevgeny Vladimirovich Deshko, born 7 May 1989 – arrested on 29 April 2019; detained on 1 May 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

17) Ruslan Nikolayevich Korolyov, born 8 August 1982 – arrested on 25 April 2019; detained on 26 April 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

18) Valery Anatolyevich Shalyev, born 23 September 1977 – arrested on 25 April 2019; detained on 26 April 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

19) Viktor Ivanovich Malkov, born 21 February 1959 – arrested on 25 April 2019; detained on 26 April 2019 for two months; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

20) Tatyana Stepanovna Galkevich, born 2 August 1959 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

21) Valentina Ivanovna Vladimirova, born 15 April 1956 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Stavropol – Neftekumsk

22) Aleksandr Andreyevich Akopov, born 4 November 1992 – arrested on 9 December 2018; detained on 12 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

23) Konstantin Valeryevich Samsonov, born 8 April 1977 – arrested on 9 December 2018; detained on 12 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

24) Shamil Shapiyevich Sultanov, born 16 March 1977 – arrested on 9 December 2018; detained on 12 December 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Tomsk

25) Sergey Gennadyevich Klimov, born 26 March 1970 – arrested on 3 June 2018; detained on 5 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; investigation completed, case sent to October District Court May 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Volgograd

26) Sergei Nikolayevich Melnik, born 29 June 1972 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

27) Vyacheslav Ivanovich Osipov, born 17 October 1970 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

28) Valery Anatolyevich Rogozin, born 25 March 1962 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

29) Igor Artyomovich Yegozaryan, born 17 January 1965 – arrested on 16 May 2019; detained on 18 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

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- Pre-trial Detention ordered in absentia

Oryol

1) Vitaly Gennadyevich Maksimov, born 27 December 1980 – has left Russia, detention ordered in absentia (on wanted list); charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 September 2018

2) Dmitry Andreyevich Prikhodko, born 17 March 1986 – has left Russia, detention ordered in absentia (on wanted list); charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 20 September 2018

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- House Arrest

Kemerovo – Berezyovsky

1) Khasan Abduvaitovich Kogut, born 7 May 1983 – arrested on 6 February 2019 on being summoned to FSB office; detained for 48 hours then put under house arrest on 8 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 February 2019

Kirov

2) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Korobeynikov, born 14 December 1952 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained on 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 1 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

3) Maksim Valeryevich Khalturin, born 3 September 1974 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained on 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 1 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

4) Andrei Sergeyeovich Suvorkov, 26 February 1993 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained on 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 1 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

5) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Suvorkov, born 3 February 1978 – arrested on 9 October 2018; detained 12 October 2018; put under house arrest on 28 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 November 2018

Khabarovsk

6) Stanislav Viktorovich Kim, born 5 July 1968 – arrested on 10 November 2018; detained on 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 30 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

7) Vitaly Vyacheslavovich Zhuk, born 8 April 1972 – arrested 10 November 2018; detained 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 14 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Nikolai Yuryevich Polevodov, born 10 February 1970 – arrested on 10 November 2018; detained on 12 November 2018; placed under house arrest on 14 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Uray

9) Andrey Vladimirovich Sazonov, born 15 August 1980 – arrested on 6 February 2019; detained on 8 February 2019; put under house arrest on 26 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Yevgeny Nikolayevich Kayrak, born 29 March 1986 – arrested on 15 February 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 24 March 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Krasnoyarsk

11) Andrei Garafetanovich Stupnikov, born 17 September 1973 – arrested on 3 July 2018; detained on 4 July 2018; put under house arrest on 1 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Novosibirsk

12) Aleksandr Ivanovich Seryodkin, born 1 December 1954 – arrested on 19 April 2019; put under house arrest on 21 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 8 May 2019

13) Valery Vladimirovich Maletskov, born 13 September 1974 – arrested on 19 April 2019 and detained for 1 day; put under house arrest on 21 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 8 May 2019

Penza

14) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kulyasov, born 17 April 1974 – arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

15) Andrei Aleksandrovich Magliv, born 20 June 1984 – arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

16) Denis Vladimirovich Timoshin, born 23 March 1980 – arrested on 15 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 17 July 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

17) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Alushkin, born 30 June 1964 – arrested on 15 July 2018; detained on 17 July 2018; put under house arrest on 14 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 September 2018

Primorye – Spassk-Dalny

18) Dmitry Yuryevich Malyovany, born 24 April 1990 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

19) Olga Alekseyevna Opaleva, born 22 April 1952 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

20) Olga Aleksandrovna Panyuta, born 11 June 1959 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

21) Aleksei Borisovich Trofimov, born 23 April 1959 – arrested 25 November 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

Smolensk

22) Natalya Igoryevna Sorokina, born 12 March 1975 – arrested in Sychyovka on 7 October 2018; detained on 9 October 2018; put under house arrest on 15 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

23) Mariya Vladimirovna Troshina, born 13 February 1977 – arrested in Sychyovka on 7 October 2018; detained on 9 October 2018; put under house arrest on 15 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Tatarstan – Naberezhniye Chelny

24) Ilkham Shamilyevich Karimov, born 9 February 1981 – arrested on 27 May 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; put under house arrest on 27 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

25) Konstantin Viktorovich Matrashov, born 22 August 1988 arrested on 27 May 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; put under house arrest on 14 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

26) Vladimir Nikolayevich Myakushin, born 6 November 1987 – arrested on 27 May 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; put under house arrest on 13 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

27) Aydar Maratovich Yulmetyev, born August 1993 – arrested on 29 May 2018; detained on 31 May 2018; put under house arrest on 13 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Ulyanovsk

28) Sergei Aleksandrovich Mysin, born 21 June 1965 – arrested on 27 February 2019; detained on 28 February 2019; put under house arrest on 23 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

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- Travel Restrictions

Amur – Blagoveshchensk

1) Dmitry Mikhailovich Golik, born 26 March 1987 – arrested on 20 July 2018; unknown if detained for 48 hours or when placed under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 August 2018

2) Aleksei Aleksandrovich Berchuk, born 17 November 1975 – arrested on 21 January 2019 and detained temporarily, then placed under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 August 2018

Amur – Zeya

3) Konstantin Aleksandrovich Moiseyenko, born 17 May 1976 – arrested 21 March 2019; put under travel restrictions the same day; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Arkhangelsk – Severodvinsk

4) Vladimir Aleksandrovich Teterin, born 14 April 1957 – arrested on 13 March 2019; put under travel restrictions the same day; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Bashkortostan – Dyurtyuli

5) Anton Nikolayevich Lemeshev, born 18 February 1987 – arrested on 18 October 2018; detained on 20 October 2018; put under house arrest on 31 October 2018; released under travel restrictions on 15 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Bashkortostan – Ufa

6) Anatoly Sergeyevich Vilitkevich, born 15 September 1986 – arrested on 10 April 2018; detained on 12 April 2018; placed under house arrest on 21 June 2018; released under travel restrictions on 28 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 7 July 2018

Ivanovo – Shuya

7) Aleksey Albertovich Arkhipov, born 13 July 1960 – arrested no earlier than 22 June 2018 and put under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

8) Yelena Valentinovna Mikhailova, born 9 August 1983 – arrested 29 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 22 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

9) Svetlana Anatolyevna Ryzhkova, born 22 June 1953 – arrested on 26 June 2018, unknown if detained; put under travel restrictions 27 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Svetlana Yuryevna Shishina, born 16 November 1975 – arrested 29 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 22 June 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

11) Dmitry Vasilyevich Mikhailov, born 25 October 1977 – arrested on 19 April 2018; detained on 29 May 2018; released under travel restrictions on 15 November 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2 and Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Jewish Autonomous Region – Birobidzhan

12) Alam Abdulaziz ogly Aliyev, born 14 January 1963 – arrested on 17 May 2018; detained on 18 May 2018; released on appeal on 25 May 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List between 17 May and 13 June 2018

13) Valery Sergeyeovich Kriger, born 11 January 1968 – arrested no later than 29 June 2018 and put under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1, and Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 February 2019

14) Sergei Aleksandrovich Shulyarenko, born 16 November 1984 – case opened on 17 May 2018 but not arrested or detained; put under travel restrictions on unknown date; charged under Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 March 2019

15) Dmitry Nikolayevich Zagulin, born 29 December 1973 – case opened on 17 May 2018 but not arrested or detained; put under travel restrictions on unknown date; charged under Article 282.3, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 March 2019

Kabardino-Balkariya – Maysky

16) Yury Viktorovich Zalipayev, born 8 October 1962 – case opened in August 2017; put under travel restrictions on 24 April 2018; charged under Article 280 Part 1 and Article 282 Part 1 but latter charge dropped on 22 January 2019; currently on trial; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kamchatka – Yelizovo

17) Konstantin Aleksandrovich Bazhenov, born 24 July 1977 – arrested on 19 August 2018; detained on 21 August 2018; released on appeal on 29 August 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October

Khabarovsk

18) Tatyana Valentinovna Zhuk, born 13 March 1973 – arrested on 10 November 2018 and put under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

19) Maya Pavlovna Karpushkina, born 19 March 1949 – arrested on 10 November 2018 and put under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

20) Svetlana Grigoryevna Sedova, born 8 June 1969 – arrested on 10 November 2018 and put under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Surgut

21) Vyacheslav Pavlovich Boronos, born 1 June 1966 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions no later than 17 February 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

22) Vasily Vasilyevich Burunesku, born 6 September 1958 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions no later

than 17 February 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

23) Artyom Stanislavovich Kim, born 3 January 1988 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions no later than 17 February 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

24) Aleksei Nikolayevich Plekhov, born 28 July 1977 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions no later than 17 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kostroma

25) Sergey Alekseyevich Rayman, born 5 October 1996 – arrested on 25 July 2018; detained on 26 July 2018; placed under house arrest on 21 September 2018; placed under specific restrictions on 24 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

26) Valeriya Aleksandrovna Rayman, born 21 May 1993 – arrested on 25 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours; released on 27 July 2018 and put under specific restrictions; put under travel restrictions on 22 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Krasnoyarsk – Minusinsk

27) Dmitry Anatolyevich Maslov, born 7 September 1976 – arrested on 19 April 2019; put under travel restrictions no later than 22 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Magadan

28) Sergei Artyomovich Agadzhanov, born 20 October 1957 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

29) Lyubov Ivanovna Asatryan, born 11 January 1951 - arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

30) Anastasiya Petrovna Chibisova, born 25 October 1994 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

31) Galina Sergeyeovich Dergacheva, born 16 December 1956 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

32) Inna Alekseyevna Kardakova, born 2 August 1980 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

33) Irina Vladimirovna Khvostova, born 15 March 1992 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

34) Viktor Anatolyevich Revyakin, born 2 March 1957 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

35) Mikhail Yuryevich Solntsev, born 26 December 1962 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

36) Oksana Mikhailovna Solntseva, born 17 August 1966 – arrested on 20 March 2019 and released after questioning; put under travel restrictions no later than 9 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 March 2019

37) Konstantin Nikolayevich Petrov, born 9 August 1986 – arrested on 30 May 2018; detained on 1 June 2018; released from detention on appeal on 3 August 2018 and placed under house arrest; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

38) Ivan Grigoryevich Puyda, born 5 November 1978 – arrested in Khabarovsk on 30 May 2018; detained in Magadan on 1 June 2018; put under house arrest on 5 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

39) Sergey Liviyevich Yerkin, born 23 June 1953 – arrested on 30 May 2018; detained on 1 June 2018; put under house arrest on 5 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

40) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Zyablov, born 9 March 1977 – arrested on 30 May 2018; detained on 1 June 2018; put under house arrest on 5 October 2018; put under travel restrictions on 27 March 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 28 December 2018

Mordoviya – Saransk

41) Vladimir Andreyevich Atryakhin, born 29 September 1987 – arrested on 6 February 2019; detained no later than 8 February 2019; put under travel restrictions on 29 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 April 2019

Murmansk – Polyarny

42) Roman Nikolayevich Markin, born 18 March 1974 – arrested on 18 April 2018; detained no later than 20 April 2018; put under house arrest on 10 October 2018; released under travel restrictions on 7 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; investigation completed, case sent to Polyarny District Court March 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

43) Viktor Fyodorovich Trofimov, born 26 March 1957 – arrested on 18 April 2018; detained no later than 20 April 2018; put under house arrest on 10 October 2018; released under travel restrictions on 7 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; investigation completed, case sent to Polyarny District Court March 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Novosibirsk

44) Marina Stanislavovna Chaplykina, born 16 February 1971 – arrested on 19 April 2019 and detained for 1 day; put under travel restrictions on 21 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 8 May 2019

Omsk

45) Anastasiya Andreyevna Polyakova, born 25 May 1984 – arrested on 4 July 2018; detained on 6 July 2018; put under house arrest on 4 December 2018; released under travel restrictions on 5 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 August 2018

46) Sergei Valeryevich Polyakov, 28 April 1972 – arrested on 4 July 2018; detained on 6 July 2018; put under house arrest on 4 December 2018; released under travel restrictions on 5 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 15 August 2018

Orenburg

47) Pavel Aleksandrovich Lekontsev, born 5 July 1981 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

48) Sergey Viktorovich Logunov, born 28 November 1962 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

49) Aleksey Nikolayevich Matveyev, born 23 April 1983 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

50) Olga Timofeyevna Sandu, born 31 March 1984 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018 but has since left Russia; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

51) Fail Samigullovich Shangareyev, born 16 December 1960 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018 but has since left Russia (on wanted list); charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

52) Nikolay Nikolayevich Zhugin, born 14 February 1976 – arrested 16 May 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 16 May 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Penza

53) Tatyana Sergeyevna Alushkina, born 12 September 1963 – not arrested or detained but case opened on 11 July 2018; put under travel restrictions no later than 15 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

54) Galiya Anvarovna Olkhova, born 5 February 1970 – unknown whether arrested or detained but case opened on 11 July 2018; put under travel restrictions no later than 15 April 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 May 2019

Perm

55) Viktor Aleksandrovich Kuchkov, born 28 June 1967 – arrested on 17 September 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 20 September 2018; put under travel restrictions on 27 December 2018; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

56) Igor Valeryevich Turik, born 25 June 1968 – arrested on 17 September 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under house arrest on 20 September 2018; put under travel restrictions on 27 December 2018; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

Pskov – Porkhovo

57) Sergei Vasilyevich Komissarov, born 5 October 1966 – arrested on 3 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 4 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

58) Aleksei Nikolayevich Khabarov, born 15 February 1975 – arrested on 3 April 2019; put under travel restrictions on 4 April 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Vladivostok, Primorye

59) Valentin Pavlovich Osadchuk, born 15 March 1976 – arrested on 19 April 2018; detained on 23 April 2018; put under house arrest on 18 January 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 (upgraded from Part 2 on 1 April 2019); not on Rosfinmonitoring List

60) Nailya Sunatovna Kogay, born 5 October 1951 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

61) Lyubov Aleksandrovna Galaktionova, born 14 July 1942 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

62) Nina Ivanovna Purge, born 19 June 1940 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

63) Raisa Mikhailovna Usanova, born 28 September 1947 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

64) Yelena Viktorovna Zayshchuk, born 25 August 1934 – arrested on 19 April 2018; put under travel restrictions on 19 April; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

65) Nadezhda Anoykina, unknown date of birth – under travel restrictions; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Sakha-Yakutiya – Lensk

66) Igor Nikolayevich Ivashin, born 16 April 1976 – arrested on 30 June or 1 July; put under travel restrictions on 2 July; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Saratov

67) Gennady Vasilyevich German, born 12 June 1969 – arrested on 12 June 2018 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 14 June 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

68) Roman Aleksandrovich Gridasov, born 16 September 1978 – arrested on 12 June 2018 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 14 June 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

69) Aleksey Petrovich Miretsky, born 14 December 1975 – arrested on 12 June 2018 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 14 June 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Sverdlovsk – Karpinsk

70) Venera Nikolayevna Dulova, born 3 January 1961 – arrested no earlier than 1 August 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

71) Aleksandr Vitalyevich Pryanikov, born 18 May 1987 – arrested no earlier than 21 September 2018 and placed under travel restrictions; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Tatarstan – Naberezhnyye Chelny

72) Zinaida Viktorovna Soldatova, born 2 April 1967 – arrested on 27 March 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 12 June 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

73) Valentina Ivanovna Stepkina, born 18 January 1951 – arrested on 27 March 2018 but not detained; put under travel restrictions on 6 June 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Parts 1, 1.1, and 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

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- Specific Restrictions

Arkhangelsk

1) Yevgeny Viktorovich Yakku, born 22 February 1980 – arrested on 18 February 2019 and held in temporary detention; released under specific restrictions on 19 February 2019 – not allowed to go out at night, to hold "meetings and gatherings" at home, to use the telephone, post, or internet, or to communicate with anyone else involved in the case; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1.1 and Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 4 April 2019

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region

2) Yevgeny Anatolyevich Fedin, born 7 February 1977 – arrested on 15 February 2019; detained on 18 February 2019; released on 11 April 2019 and put under specific restrictions – not allowed to go out at night, communicate with others involved in the case, or use the post, telephone, or internet; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 1.1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

3) Sergey Pavlovich Loginov, born 18 September 1961 – arrested on 15 February 2019; detained on 18 February 2019; released on 11 April 2019 and put under specific restrictions – not allowed to go out at night, communicate with others involved in the

case, or use the post, telephone, or internet; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 1.1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kirov

4) Andrei Vladimirovich Shchepin, born 11 June 1991 – arrested on 26 March 2019 and detained for 48 hours; put under specific restrictions on 29 March 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 April 2019

Orenburg

5) Aleksandr Gennadyevich Suvorov, born 20 April 1980 – arrested on 16 May 2018; detained on 19 May 2018; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; put under specific restrictions on 14 October 2018 – not allowed to go out at night, send or receive post, or use other means of communication, but has since left Russia; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

6) Vladimir Yuryevich Kochnev, born 15 October 1979 – arrested on 16 May 2018; detained on 19 May 2018; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; put under specific restrictions on 14 October 2018 – not allowed to send or receive post, or use other means of communication; night-time curfew lifted on 12 February 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

7) Vladislav Sergeyeovich Kolbanov, born 27 November 1992 – arrested on 16 May 2018; put under house arrest on 19 May 2018; put under specific restrictions on 14 October 2018 – not allowed to send or receive post, or use other means of communication; night-time curfew lifted on 12 February 2019; charged under Article 282.3 Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Perm

8) Aleksandr Vasilyevich Solovyov, born 13 February 1970 – arrested on 22 May 2018; put under house arrest on 24 May 2018; put under specific restrictions on 19 November 2018 – not allowed to use the phone, internet, or postal service, or speak with other parties in the case; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Saratov

9) Konstantin Viktorovich Bazhenov, born 10 May 1975 – arrested on 12 June 2018; detained on 14 June 2018; released under specific restrictions on 20 May 2019 – cannot go out at night, communicate with anyone else involved in the case, or use the telephone or internet, and must wear electronic tag; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Aleksey Vladimirovich Budenchuk, born 27 July 1982 – arrested on 12 June 2018; detained on 14 June 2018; ; released under specific restrictions on 20 May 2019 – cannot go out at night, communicate with anyone else involved in the case, or use the telephone or internet, and must wear electronic tag; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

11) Feliks Khasanovich Makhammadiyev, born 14 December 1984 – arrested on 12 June 2018; detained on 14 June 2018; ; released under specific restrictions on 20 May 2019 – cannot go out at night, communicate with anyone else involved in the case, or use the telephone or internet, and must wear electronic tag; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Ulyanovsk

12) Khoren Nikolevich Khachikyan, born 25 April 1985 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 19 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

13) Aleksandr Vyacheslavovich Ganin, born 8 January 1957 – arrested on 15 May 2019 and held in temporary detention for 48 hours; put under specific restrictions on 16 May 2019 – not allowed to go out between 4pm and 9am, to use the telephone or internet, or to speak to anyone else involved in the case; charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

14) Natalya Aleksandrovna Mysina, born 17 December 1971 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 19 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

15) Andrei Vladimirovich Tabakov, born 23 January 1973 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 24 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

16) Mikhail Grigoryevich Zelensky, born 7 November 1960 – arrested on 27 February 2019 and held in temporary detention for one day; put under house arrest on 28 February 2019; released and put under specific restrictions on 23 April 2019 – not allowed to go out at night or use communications; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 May 2019

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- Obligation to present oneself (obyazatelstvo o yavke)

Pskov

1) Gennady Valerianovich Shpakovsky, born 6 October 1958 – arrested on 3 June 2018; put under travel restrictions on unknown date; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 6 July 2018

Kamchatka – Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky

2) Sergei Mikhailovich Ledenyov, born 23 July 1974 – arrested 2 December 2018 and put under travel restrictions which lapsed/were lifted on unknown date; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 22 May 2019

Republic of Khakasiya – Abakan

3) Roman Lyubomirovich Baranovsky, born 27 June 1974 – arrested 10 April 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

4) Valentina Ivanovna Baranovskaya, born 8 April 1951 – arrested 10 April 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kirov

5) Anatoly Mikhailovich Tokarev, born 31 December 1958 – questioned 24 May 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

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- No known restrictions

Arkhangelsk – Severodvinsk

1) Sergei Aleksandrovich Potylitsyn, born 21 May 1981 – arrested on 13 March 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

2) Andrei Nikolaevich Maksimovich, born 5 January 1995 - suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Belgorod

3) Sergey Aleksandrovich Voykov, born 28 August 1975 – arrested on 7 February 2018; released under travel restrictions on 10 February 2018, which later lapsed, but has since left Russia; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

4) Anatoly Aleksandrovich Shalyapin, born 21 January 1994 – arrested on 7 February 2018; released under travel restrictions on 10 February 2018, which later lapsed; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kamchatka – Yelizovo

5) Snezhana Yevgenyevna Bazhenova, born 20 December 1977 – arrested on 19 August 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 21 August 2018 which appear to have lapsed; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

6) Vera Ivanovna Zolotova, born 20 October 1946 – arrested on 19 August 2018 and detained for 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 21 August 2018 which appear to have lapsed; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

Kamchatka – Vilyuchinsk

7) Yelena Vyacheslavovna Popova, born 10 September 1963 – arrested on 30 July 2018 and detained for 48 hours, extended to 72 hours; placed under house arrest on 3 August 2018; released from house arrest on appeal on 10 August 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 and Article 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

8) Mikhail Yuryevich Popov, born 25 May 1962 – arrested on 30 July 2018; detained on 1 August 2018; released on appeal on 9 August 2018; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 and Article 282.2, Part 1.1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 11 October 2018

Khabarovsk

9) Yevgeniya Nikolayevna Slobodenyuk, born 24 June 1973 – has left Russia (on wanted list); suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1.1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

10) Vitaly Ivanovich Slobodenyuk, born 6 May 1973 – has left Russia (on wanted list); suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1.1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region – Surgut

11) Artur Vasilyevich Severinchik, born 27 October 1968 – arrested on 15 February 2019; detained on 18 February 2019; released on 15 March 2019; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 1.1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

12) Ilkhom Aripzhanovich Aminzhanov, born 9 February 1972 – arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

13) Sergei Vladimirovich Volosnikov, born 1977 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; unknown whether charged or suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

14) Savely Georgiyevich Gargalyk, born 10 October 1960 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

15) Timofey Viktorovich Zhukov, born 19 May 1979 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

16) Igor Sergeyeovich Kobotov, born 19 September 1973 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

17) Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Kozak, born 22 April 1994 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours, but has since left Russia; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

18) Grigory Yuryevich Ozhiganov, born 23 August 1999 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

19) Igor Vladimirovich Petrov, born 24 August 1969 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

20) Pavel Yuryevich Romashov, born 3 July 1974 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

21) Leonid Nikitevich Rysikov, born 2 January 1950 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

22) Igor Petrovich Trifonov, born 19 October 1969 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

23) Viktor Aleksandrovich Fefilov, born 3 March 1962 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

24) Viola Aleksandrovna Shepel, born 19 July 1976 – probably arrested on 15 February 2019; unknown if detained for 48 hours; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Kirov

25) Aleksandr Petrovich Shamov, born 4 November 1960 – arrested on 26 March 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 April 2019

26) Yevgeny Georgiyevich Udintsev, born 14 March 1949 – arrested on 26 March 2019 and released after questioning; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1 or 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 30 April 2019

Perm

27) Boris Ivanovich Burylov, born 8 April 1941 – arrested on 17 September 2018 but released after questioning; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

28) Yury Vladimirovich Vaag, born 21 August 1975 – unknown when arrested; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

29) Aleksandr Valeryevich Inozemtsev, 13 July 1972 – unknown when arrested; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

30) Valery Grigoryevich Petrenko, 2 March 1962 – unknown when arrested; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

31) Valery Arkadyevich Rubtsov, 20 January 1972 – unknown when arrested; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 21 February 2019

Primorye – Volno-Nadezhdinskoye

32) Grigory Gennadyevich Bubnov, born 4 September 1965 – arrested 16 July 2018; charged under Article 282.2, Part 1; investigation completed, case sent to Nadezhdinsky District Court 31 May 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Primorye – Spassk-Dalny

33) Sergei Vladimirovich Konyukhov, born 26 July 1983 – unknown when/if arrested; unknown whether charged or suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 14 February 2019

Sakhalin

34) Sergei Vladimirovich Kulakov, born 18 April 1961 – arrested on 20 January 2019; suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Stavropol – Neftekumsk

35) Aleksei Gennadyevich Shcherbich, born 27 April 1972 – arrested on 9 December 2018, but has since left Russia; unknown whether charged or suspect under Article 282.2, Part 1; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Volgograd

36) Ivan Valkovsky, born 1982/83 – arrested on 16 May 2019 and released the same day; unknown whether suspect or charged under Article 282.2, Part 2; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

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- Trials already completed

Oryol

1) Dennis Ole Christensen, Danish citizen, born 18 December 1972 – arrested on 25 May 2017; detained on 26 May 2017; convicted on 6 February 2019 under Article 282.2, Part 1 and given six-year jail term; appeal rejected 23 May 2019; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 March 2018

2) Sergei Vladimirovich Skrynnikov, born 30 October 1962 – arrested 25 May 2017 but not detained beyond 48 hours; put under travel restrictions on 13 March 2018 – lifted after his conviction; convicted under Article 282.2, Part 2 and fined 350,000 Roubles; added to Rosfinmonitoring List on 27 March 2018

Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya

3) Arkadya Akopovich Akopyan, born 28 May 1948 – put under travel restrictions on 3 May 2017; convicted under Article 282, Part 1 on 27 December 2018; acquitted on appeal on 1 March 2019; not on Rosfinmonitoring List

Second Oryol Jehovah's Witness appeal

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (27.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Xues63> - The appeal of a second Jehovah's Witness convicted in the Russian city of Oryol for allegedly continuing the activities of the banned local Jehovah's Witness community is due to be heard at the Regional Court on 13 June. Sergei Skrynnikov is appealing against his 1 April conviction by an Oryol court for participation in a "banned extremist organisation" and a fine of about a year and a half's average local wages.

Like many other individuals convicted or suspected of "extremism"-related crimes to punish them for exercising freedom of religion or belief, Skrynnikov has also had his bank accounts blocked (see below).

On 23 May, the same Regional Court upheld the six-year prison term on fellow Jehovah's Witness Dennis Christensen. He is now considering an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg, his wife Irina told Forum 18.

Skrynnikov was initially investigated alongside Christensen, using information from the FSB security service investigation into Christensen, but investigators opened a separate case against him in March 2018 (see below).

Oryol Jehovah's Witness ban, then nationwide ban

Oryol Regional Court declared "extremist" and liquidated Oryol's Jehovah's Witness community in June 2016. Russia's Supreme Court rejected the community's appeal in October 2016.

In 2017 Jehovah's Witnesses were banned nationwide as allegedly "extremist" and all their communities were ordered to be liquidated. This made any Jehovah's Witness exercising freedom of religion and belief liable to criminal prosecution..

The 25th hearing in the criminal trial of another Jehovah's Witness, Yury Zalipayev, in the North Caucasus is due on 3 June. He faces a maximum four-year jail term if convicted of "public calls for extremist activity" (see below).

Torture, armed raids on Jehovah's Witness homes continue

Seven Jehovah's Witnesses were tortured at the Investigative Committee building in Surgut (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region) after their 15 February arrest. "Agents put a bag over the victims' heads, sealed it with tape, tied their hands behind their backs, and beat them," Jehovah's Witnesses stated. "Then, after stripping the Witnesses naked and dousing them with water, the agents shocked them with stun guns. This sadistic torture lasted for about two hours." The men have lodged an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (see below).

Armed raids on Jehovah's Witness homes have continued across Russia. The seven men in Surgut are among at least 189 Jehovah's Witnesses known to be facing criminal prosecution for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. (For full list, see forthcoming F18News article.) Of these, 28 are known to be in pre-trial detention (three women, 25 men), another 28 under house arrest (four women, 24 men) and 73 under travel restrictions (see below).

Muslim made stateless and ordered deported after labour camp term

Muslims who study the works of the late Muslim theologian Said Nursi face similar "extremism"-related prosecutions. In what appears to be a first, Yevgeny Kim, arrested in 2015 and convicted in 2017 for meeting with others to study Nursi's books, was deprived of his Russian citizenship, leaving him stateless, and on 10 April 2019 – the day he completed his prison term – was fined and ordered deported to his country of birth.

Oryol conviction, large fine

After 35 hearings over eight months, another Jehovah's Witness from Oryol, Sergei Vladimirovich Skrynnikov (born 30 October 1962), was found guilty of "extremist activity" at the city's Railway District Court on 1 April.

Judge Gleb Noskov handed him a fine of 350,000 Roubles under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 ("Participation in a banned extremist organisation") for allegedly continuing the activities of the Oryol Jehovah's Witness community, banned as "extremist" in 2016.

The fine represents about a year and a half's average wage in Oryol for those in formal work.

Skrynnikov was initially investigated alongside Dennis Christensen, but investigators opened a separate criminal case against him in March 2018. The evidence against him came from the FSB security service's investigation of Christensen.

According to an Investigative Committee statement of 20 February 2018, Skrynnikov was accused of attending a Jehovah's Witness meeting at which he made "a public speech containing propaganda of the banned organisation".

Under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2, Skrynnikov could have received a fine of up to 600,000 Roubles, compulsory labour for up to four years, or a prison term of two to six years.

Skrynnikov lodged an appeal against his conviction on 9 April 2019. This is due to be considered at Oryol Regional Court on 13 June, Jehovah's Witnesses told Forum 18.

Skrynnikov has been under travel restrictions since 13 March 2018. On 27 March 2018, investigators had his name added to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged to freeze, apart from small transactions.

Ongoing trial in North Caucasus

The criminal trial of Yury Viktorovich Zalipayev (born 8 October 1962) at Maysky District Court (Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya) continued throughout April with the questioning of defence witnesses, and into May with the examination of audio recordings of religious meetings in which Zalipayev participated. Jehovah's Witnesses say that there was no evidence in these recordings of any expressions of religious hatred.

Judge Yelena Kudryavtseva has also examined the phone records of prosecution witnesses, which, Jehovah's Witnesses state, suggest that they "acted under the direction" of an FSB security service officer and only attended religious meetings on his instructions.

Zalipayev has undergone 24 hearings so far, with the next due on 3 June 2019.

Zalipayev remains accused of "Public calls for extremist activity" (Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1), which carries a maximum punishment of four years' imprisonment plus a ban on specific activity.

Zalipayev has already been acquitted under Criminal Code 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") in connection with the partial decriminalisation of this offence.

Although prosecutors had themselves requested that the Criminal Code Article 282, Part 1 charge be dropped, they still appealed against the judge's decision to recognise Zalipayev's right to rehabilitation and compensation. The Supreme Court of Kabardino-Balkariya, however, upheld the lower court's ruling on 15 March 2019.

Zalipayev remains under travel restrictions, but his name has not been added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists".

Torture in Surgut

Seven Jehovah's Witnesses have stated that they were tortured at the Investigative Committee building in Surgut (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region) after being arrested on 15 February.

When they refused to give any information on fellow believers, investigators subjected them to electric shocks, beatings, and attempted suffocation. Investigators continued to question them throughout: "Where are Jehovah's Witness meetings held? Who attends the meetings? What are the elders' names? What is your mobile phone password?"

According to the *jw-russia* website, after the only legal representative in the room left, "Agents put a bag over the victims' heads, sealed it with tape, tied their hands behind their backs, and beat them," Jehovah's Witnesses stated. "Then, after stripping the Witnesses naked and dousing them with water, the agents shocked them with stun guns. This sadistic torture lasted for about two hours."

All those who state they were tortured have now been released from detention. They have had their injuries documented by doctors, and are seeking redress for their treatment.

The United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Russia (as the Soviet Union) ratified in 1987, defines torture as: "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity".

Under Article 6 of the Convention, Russia is obliged to arrest any person suspected on good grounds of having committed torture. Under Article 4, Russia is obliged to try them under criminal law which makes "these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature". No such arrests or prosecutions of the torturers, or those who facilitated the torture, are known to have happened.

Similarly, no arrests or prosecutions of the officials who tortured Muslim prisoner of conscience Yevgeny Kim, or those who facilitated this, are known to have happened. However, Kim himself was deprived of his Russian citizenship, leaving him stateless, and on 10 April 2019 – the day he completed his labour camp term – was fined and ordered deported to his country of birth.

The seven tortured Jehovah's Witnesses lodged an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg on 25 February (Loginov and others versus Russia, Application No. 10618/19). The Court sent the Russian government a request for "factual information" on the case on 26 February. Russia "submitted the requested information" on 18 March, Court officials told Forum 18 on 27 May.

On 25 February, Andrey Babushkin, a member of the Presidential Human Rights Council and chair of the Commission to Support Public Monitoring Commissions, demanded an end to the violent treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Surgut. In a statement to the General Prosecutor's Office, the head of the Investigative Committee, and the Public Monitoring Commission for the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, he insisted that a criminal case be opened against the investigators responsible.

After a subsequent internal investigation, the Investigative Committee refused to open a criminal case, but on 14 May, the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region's Prosecutor's Office insisted on a fresh examination of the Jehovah's Witnesses' complaints.

Numbers facing prosecution continue to rise

The Surgut torture victims are among a total of 189 people now facing criminal prosecution (including Yury Zalipayev, already on trial), as armed raids on Jehovah's Witness homes have continued across Russia. Investigators have also arrested some people at their workplaces. Many have spent long periods in detention or under house arrest. None has yet been brought to court, although officials have informed several people that the investigations of their cases have now been completed.

For a full list of those facing criminal prosecution, see forthcoming F18News article.

Between January 2018 and May 2019, raids have taken place in the following 36 of Russia's 83 federal subjects (not counting Russian-occupied Crimea and Sevastopol): Amur, Arkhangelsk, Republic of Bashkortostan, Belgorod, Ivanovo, Jewish Autonomous Region, Kamchatka, Kemerovo, Khabarovsk, Republic of Khakasiya, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, Kirov, Kostroma, Krasnoyarsk, Magadan, Republic of Mordoviya, Murmansk, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Oryol, Penza, Perm, Primorye, Pskov, Rostov, Republic of Sakha-Yakutiya, Sakhalin, Saratov, Smolensk, Stavropol, Sverdlovsk, Republic of Tatarstan, Tomsk, Ulyanovsk, and Volgograd.

Forty-one women and 148 men are thought to have consequently been charged or named as suspects under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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"), or Part 1.1 ("Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation"), as well as Criminal Code Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing of extremist activity").

Twenty-eight people are known to be in pre-trial detention (three women, 25 men). Another 28 are under house arrest (four women, 24 men) and 73 under travel restrictions (28 women, 45 men). Officials have placed 16 people (one woman, 15 men) under specific sets of restrictions (such as not being allowed to go out at night or use the telephone or internet). One woman and three men are under an obligation to appear before investigators promptly when summoned. Thirty-five people (five women, 30 men) appear to be under no restrictions. The status of a further five men is currently unknown.

Officials have had 71 of these people added to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose assets banks are obliged to freeze, except for small transactions (Dennis Christensen and Sergei Skrynnikov also appear on the List).

Six people are on the Interior Ministry's federal wanted list as their whereabouts are unknown. Two of them – Fail Samigullovich Shangareyev (born 16 December 1960) and Olga Timofeyevna Sandu (born 31 March 1984) - are known to have left Russia.

Raids and arrests

The 2018 and 2019 raids have fallen into a pattern. Officials from a variety of agencies, including armed men in masks and body armour, arrive at Jehovah's Witnesses' addresses usually late at night or early in the morning. The occupants are sometimes made to lie on the floor or face the wall while the officers search their homes.

Officers then confiscate a similar range of possessions – phones, other electronic devices, bank cards, personal photographs, and books – and take the Jehovah's Witnesses, including children and the elderly, to a police station, FSB office, or Investigative Committee branch for questioning.

Such questioning can last for several hours, after which most people are released (some under travel restrictions). Others are kept in temporary detention until investigators decide whether to apply to a court for longer-term restrictive measures – they must do this within 48 hours of the initial detention.

A judge then decides whether to grant an investigator's request to place an individual in detention or under house arrest. An initial period of detention/house arrest lasts for two months from the date the criminal case was opened (usually on or shortly before the date of the raid). Towards the end of this period, investigators must apply to the court again to seek an extension. Detainees themselves may appeal to a higher court to have these restrictive measures lifted or reduced – on occasion, such appeals have been successful.

"Extremism" charges

Jehovah's Witnesses have largely been charged (or named as suspects) under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 or Part 2 ("Organisation of" or "Participation in the activities of a banned extremist organisation"). For exercising their right to freedom of religion and belief by meeting for worship, they stand accused of "continuing the activities" of the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre and its subsidiary local organisations, all of which the Russian Supreme Court ruled "extremist" and ordered liquidated in April 2017.

Investigators have also charged a few individuals under Criminal Code Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing of extremist activity"), or Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1.1 ("Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation").

These prosecutions are happening despite the Supreme Court judges' insistence when they issued the ruling that it "does not amount to prohibition of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses as such", and despite the fact that the Russian government has twice claimed that the ban "does not contain a restriction or prohibition on individual profession of [Jehovah's Witness] teachings".

Jehovah's Witness appeal fails, appeal to Strasbourg

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (24.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2WPErYv> - Danish citizen Dennis Christensen has become the first Jehovah's Witness in post-Soviet Russia to be jailed for exercising the right to freedom of religion and belief. On 23 May an appeal court in the city of Oryol upheld his six-year jail sentence, originally handed down in February. The panel of three judges made only minor alterations to the original verdict. It immediately entered into legal force.

Prisoner of conscience Christensen's lawyers maintained that his actions (in opening and closing the Kingdom Hall, seeing to its upkeep, collecting donations, and leading prayers) did not constitute a threat to public values. Christensen himself told the court that the FSB security service "forged documents and expert examinations, and used false and

hidden witnesses against me, who lied in court. .. I will not give up, because I am sure that I am not guilty of these accusations and that the truth is on my side. I am not afraid to be sent on to a labour camp, although this would be a completely unfair decision" (see below).

Arrested in May 2017, Christensen was convicted on 6 February 2019 for his alleged role - denied by Christiansen and Jehovah's Witnesses - in leading the local Jehovah's Witness branch in Oryol. The judge jailed him for six years in a labour camp. He has spent the two years of the investigation, trial, and appeal in detention. One day in detention before a verdict enters legal force is taken as equivalent to one and a half days' imprisonment. It is therefore likely that he will serve about three more years to complete his six-year sentence in 2022. He is now preparing for transfer to a labour camp ("correctional colony").

The 46-year-old Danish citizen and prisoner of conscience Christensen moved to Russia from Denmark in 1995 to work on the construction of the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre near St Petersburg. He later settled in Murmansk and in 2002 married Irina, a Russian citizen. In 2006, he moved to Oryol, where he worked as a builder and carpenter.

Irina Christensen told Forum 18 on 24 May that both she and Dennis had expected that the guilty verdict would be upheld. They will not take the case to the Russian Supreme Court, but will appeal directly to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg. "It is terrible, a 6-year jail sentence for believing in God," Irina commented to Forum 18 in February. "I couldn't believe that such a thing could happen in Russia".

At present Dennis is "holding up well", Irina Christensen added, and is being supported by friends.

2017 nationwide Jehovah's Witness ban follows local 2016 Oryol ban

In 2017 Jehovah's Witnesses were banned nationwide as allegedly "extremist". This made any Jehovah's Witness exercising freedom of religion and belief liable to criminal prosecution. As well as raids, detentions and criminal prosecutions, Jehovah's Witnesses also face the loss of property and other problems.

Young Jehovah's Witness men have been denied their right to perform alternative civilian service rather than military service, and Jehovah's Witness employees have been fired or forced to resign from their jobs. The children of Jehovah's Witnesses have also faced threats and bullying by the authorities.

The registered Jehovah's Witness organisation in Oryol was earlier ruled "extremist" and ordered liquidated in June 2016. Christensen's prosecution is derived from this local ban, and not the nationwide prohibition on Jehovah's Witness activities, which came into force in July 2017, after the case against him was initiated.

"It is enough for law enforcement authorities to prove that he believes in God in the wrong way"

Jehovah's Witness spokesperson Yaroslav Sivulsky condemned the Regional Court's decision to uphold Christensen's conviction, likening such convictions to being punished "on a par with thieves and murderers". "Today it has become clear that the statements of the Russian authorities before international bodies that the liquidation of Jehovah's Witness legal entities 'do not contain any restriction or prohibition on practicing these teachings' is nothing more than slyness," Sivulsky commented on 23 May 2019. "In order to convict a person for extremism and an attempt on the constitutional order, and then

punish him on a par with thieves and murderers, it is enough for law enforcement authorities to prove that he believes in God in the wrong way and catch him reading the Bible." (see below).

Prosecutions increasing

In April 2019, a court in Oryol convicted another local Jehovah's Witness on "extremism"-related charges. Sergei Skrynnikov is appealing against the heavy fine handed down on him. He was initially investigated alongside Dennis Christensen, but investigators opened a separate case against him in March 2018.

The number of other Jehovah's Witnesses facing similar "extremism"-related prosecutions is now approaching 200, as armed raids, arrests, and detentions continue across the country. Several Jehovah's Witnesses in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region have complained that they were tortured and beaten during their interrogations by Investigative Committee operatives.

Several human rights bodies have demanded an end to such tactics, and Jehovah's Witnesses have also filed an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights.

Muslims who study the works of the late Muslim theologian Said Nursi face similar "extremism"-related prosecutions. In what appears to be a first, Yevgeny Kim, arrested in 2015 and convicted in 2017 for meeting with others to study Nursi's books, was deprived of his Russian citizenship, leaving him stateless, and on 10 April 2019 – the day he completed his prison term – was fined and ordered deported to his country of birth.

Christensen's February 2019 sentence

After a trial lasting nearly a year, Judge Aleksei Rudnev of Railway District Court, Oryol, initially found Christensen guilty on 6 February 2019 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 judge jailed him for six years in a labour camp.

Prosecutors accused Christensen of "continuing the activities" of Oryol's former registered Jehovah's Witness community, which was dissolved as "extremist" in 2016.

Christensen and his lawyers argued, however, that he had held no leadership position, that Jehovah's Witnesses in Oryol retained the right to practise their faith, and that Jehovah's Witnesses had never engaged in "extremist activity", either before or after the ban.

Russian human rights group Memorial (which recognised Christensen as a political prisoner in July 2017) condemned the conviction. "This shameful and anti-legal decision has added Russia to the ranks of countries with the most odious regimes," it noted on 8 February.

"It is an absurd situation when Jehovah's Witnesses convicted under the Soviet regime are recognised as victims of political repression in accordance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act (1991) - and at the same time the current followers of the Jehovah's Witness faith are being sent to prison," Memorial added.

"This verdict again confirms the flawed nature of the Russia's 'anti-extremism' legislation, which allows for the inclusion of almost everyone under the extremist label. We demand the abolition of the unconstitutional ban on Jehovah's Witnesses."

Unsuccessful appeal

A panel of three judges – Olga Zuyenko, Aleksandr Bukhtiyarov, and Andrei Rogachyov – heard Christensen's appeal at Oryol Regional Court over four days between 7 and 23 May 2019.

Christensen's defence lawyers argued that neither the liquidation of Oryol's Jehovah's Witness community in 2016 nor that of the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre in 2017 constituted a prohibition on Jehovah's Witness worship. They pointed out that the Supreme Court, in its appeal verdict of 17 July 2017, commented that "the Court did not assess the legality of Jehovah's Witness beliefs or the means of their expression".

The defence lawyers reminded the judges that investigators had found no banned "extremist" literature (the presence of which had been used to justify both local-level and national-level liquidations) either in the Kingdom Hall or Christensen's home. They maintained that Christensen's actions (in opening and closing the Kingdom Hall, seeing to its upkeep, collecting donations, and leading prayers) did not constitute a threat to public values.

In his speech at the final appeal hearing on 23 May, Christensen recalled: "About two years ago, I said to the court at one of the many hearings on the extension of my time in detention: 'I ask you to give me back my life!' And I am still asking for this! Yes, I want you to give me back my life, so that I can again live peacefully and quietly in this beautiful city with my wife Irina. For almost two years I have not had my own life. I lived the kind of life that others have chosen for me."

"The FSB has blackened and smeared my good name," Christensen continued. "They forged documents and expert examinations, and used false and hidden witnesses against me, who lied in court. They did all this to make an extremist out of a peaceful believer, which is dangerous for the people around them and for Russian national security. In fact, these are ridiculous and absurd accusations."

Christensen concluded: "I will not give up, because I am sure that I am not guilty of these accusations and that the truth is on my side. I am not afraid to be sent on to a labour camp, although this would be a completely unfair decision."

Only minor changes to verdict

Despite the arguments of Christensen's defence lawyers, the appeal panel on 23 May decided to uphold the guilty verdict and jail sentence.

"The Judicial Collegium for Criminal Cases of Oryol Regional Court, after hearing the participants in the court proceedings, examining the case materials, and discussing the arguments set forth in the appeal, considered untenable the argument of the defence that no offence had been committed, and [concluded] that the actions of Dennis Ole Christensen constituted a crime," the court's press department said in a statement on its website on 23 May.

According to this statement, the judges introduced some minor alterations to the original verdict, clarifying Christensen's employment status (he is an individual entrepreneur) and residency in Russia (his current permission to live in the country expires on 22 March 2022).

The judges also added to the "description of the offence" a note that Christensen, "with the aims of continuing and developing an extremist religious association", had "agreed

and coordinated his actions as leader of the Oryol Jehovah's Witness local religious organisation" with the Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre, "which was liquidated by a Supreme Court ruling of 20 April 2017, due to its implementation of extremist activity since 2010".

Forum 18 wrote to the Oryol Region Prosecutor's Office on 6 February to ask why it had sought a jail sentence and in what way Christensen could be considered dangerous.

"A legal evaluation of Christensen's actions was given by the court," Tatyana Tsukanova, head of the press office, replied on 28 February. She noted that the Russian judiciary is independent and governed only by the Constitution and federal law, and that the imposition of punishments lies entirely within the competence of the courts.

Punished "on a par with thieves and murderers"

Jehovah's Witness spokesperson Yaroslav Sivulsky condemned the Regional Court's decision to uphold Christensen's conviction.

"Today it has become clear that the statements of the Russian authorities before international bodies that the liquidation of Jehovah's Witness legal entities 'do not contain any restriction or prohibition on practicing these teachings' is nothing more than slyness," Sivulsky commented on 23 May.

"As we have seen, in order to convict a person for extremism and an attempt on the constitutional order, and then punish him on a par with thieves and murderers, it is enough for law enforcement authorities to prove that he believes in God in the wrong way and catch him reading the Bible. Such court decisions have been known since biblical times. In Russia, we experienced all this in the Soviet years. But, as history shows, none of the goals for which such a repressive mechanism has been launched will be achieved."

Arrested in 2017 raid on Kingdom Hall

Oryol's registered Jehovah's Witness community was ordered liquidated as an "extremist organisation" in June 2016 – the decision came into force in October 2016 after an unsuccessful appeal to the Supreme Court.

Dennis Ole Christensen (born 18 December 1972) has been in detention since 25 May 2017, when police and FSB officers arrested him at a worship meeting and soon afterwards charged him 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").

Video footage posted online by a local news outlet showed armed state officials, some in balaclavas and body armour, raiding a Kingdom Hall in Oryol and searching the premises. FSB searches of Christensen's home and five other local Jehovah's Witness households followed his detention.

From May 2017 onwards, Oryol courts denied repeated requests from Christensen's lawyers to have him transferred home under house arrest.

Christensen was held since his arrest at Oryol's Investigation Prison No. 1.

On 27 March 2018, officials added Christensen to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose accounts banks are obliged

to freeze, apart from small transactions. Christensen's wife Irina told Forum 18 on 6 February 2019 that although his accounts had been blocked, hers had not.

Danish Jehovah's Witness Dennis Christensen loses appeal: 6 years in prison

<https://bit.ly/2wx3IYR>

Orel Oblast court upholds sentence of Dennis Christensen

Orlovskie Novosti (23.05.2019) - On 23 May, the Orel oblast court left in force the sentence of the Zheleznodorozhny district court with respect to Danish citizen Dennis Christensen, who was found guilty of extremism and sentenced to six years imprisonment, an Orlovskie Novosti correspondent reports.

In his final word, Christensen asked the court to acquit him and to show to the whole world that in the Russian Federation there is real freedom of religious confession. In the debates the prosecution insisted that the sentence of the first instance was legal and reasonable. The debates stretched out into three sessions.

The oblast court took less than an hour to issue the decision on the appeal. Now Christensen will be transported to a penal colony. His defense intends to appeal the sentence in the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

Appellate court in Orel leaves in force decision on prison term for Danish citizen Jehovah's Witness

Credo Press (23.05.2019) - On 23 May, a panel of three judges of the Orel oblast court left in force the verdict of the lower-standing Zheleznodorozhny district court by which citizen of Denmark Dennis Christensen was sentenced to six years in a penal colony of general regime for active profession of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. He was found guilty under article 282.2 (1) of the CC of RF, since he allegedly "continued the activity" of the liquidated organization of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Now, as the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses reported to the portal Credo.Press, Christensen will be transported to the penal colony from SIZO [investigation cell] No. 1 for Orel oblast, where he has already spent almost two years. Meanwhile, preparation for consideration of his appeal in the European Court of Human Rights is underway, with the participation of the government of Denmark as an interested party.

"Today it became clear that the declaration of Russian authorities before international instances to the effect that the liquidation of the legal entity of Jehovah's Witnesses 'does not contain restriction or prohibition of confessing individually the aforementioned teaching,' is nothing more than guile," a representative of the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, Yaroslav Sivulsky, declared. "As we have seen, in order to convict a person of extremism and an assassination attempt upon the constitutional order, and then to punish him as an equal of thieves and murderers, it is sufficient for law enforcement to prove that he believes in the wrong god and to catch him reading the Bible. Such judicial decisions have been known since back in biblical times. In Russia, we experienced all this in soviet years. But, as history shows, not one of the goals for which such a cruel mechanism of repression has been launched will be achieved."

Dennis Christensen has been under arrest since 25 May 2017. He became the first Jehovah's Witness in contemporary Russia to be imprisoned for his faith. After the arrest

of the Dane, massive searches and arrests of people, whom law enforcement agencies consider to be extremists merely for their religious confession, began in a majority of regions of the country. Dozens of Russian citizens and one other foreigner are in a SIZO or under house arrest within the frameworks of criminal cases similar to the Orel one. Acting in accordance with a single pattern, law enforcement agencies open cases against peaceful citizens who assemble for prayer and reading the Bible in private homes.

Support for Dennis Christensen, whose case many view as precedent setting, has been expressed by authoritative international and Russian rights advocacy organizations. Denmark acted in the capacity of a third party in the case "Christensen v. Russia," which is being considered in the ECHR. The believer has been recognized as a prisoner of conscience by the Russian organization Memorial and the American Commission on International Religious Freedom. The European Union urged that Christensen be released "immediately and unconditionally." In the same spirit, the United Nations has called Russian authorities to release all persons who have been arrested for their peaceful religious convictions.

In April 2017, the Russian Supreme Court ruled all 396 religious organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia to be extremist, and it liquidated them.

Dennis Christensen's six-year prison sentence maintained on appeal



Picture: JW.org

HRWF (23.05.2019) - Today, the three-judge panel of the Oryol Regional Court denied the appeal of Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen and Jehovah's Witness, and upheld the six-year sentence he received in February. About 80 people, mostly Jehovah's Witnesses, were in attendance to hear the decision. Officials from Denmark and Australia were also present.

Mr. Christensen was arrested on 25 May 2017, in Oryol, during the raid of a peaceful gathering of Jehovah's Witnesses by Federal Security Service agents and armed police

officers wearing masks. Some 50 other worshippers were also arrested but later released without charge.

The raid and arrest came after Russia's Supreme Court banned the Jehovah's Witnesses in April 2017 over alleged extremism. It was the first time that a Jehovah's Witness has been jailed since the Soviet Union.

After his May arrest, The Sovietsky District Court ordered him to be held in pre-trial detention for two months, which he appealed unsuccessfully. On 20 July 2017 the Soviet district court of the city of Orel, ordered Mr. Christensen to remain in an investigation cell for another 4 months, until 23 November. Despite appeals, his pre-trial detention was repeatedly prolonged.

On 6 February 2019, the Zheleznodorozhniy District Court of Oryol found Mr. Christensen guilty under Article 282.2 (1) of the Russian Criminal Code for "organising the activity of an extremist organization." He was sentenced to 6 years in prison.

Imprisonment completed, citizenship stripped, awaiting deportation

By Victoria Arnold

Forum 18 (22.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Wxx74A> - The lawyer for Yevgeny Kim, stripped of Russian citizenship and left stateless on completing his nearly four-year jail term for meeting with other Muslims to study Said Nursi's works, says this is the first such case he knows of. Kim was fined and is awaiting deportation to Uzbekistan.

In what appears to be a first, an individual jailed under harsh anti-"extremism" laws for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief has been deprived of his Russian citizenship. Yevgeny Kim was by being deprived of his Russian citizenship left stateless, and – on the day he completed his nearly four-year prison term – was fined and ordered deported to his country of birth.

Asked why Kim's only citizenship was stripped from him, an Interior Ministry official in Khabarovsk told Forum 18: "His imprisonment may have had an impact on the decision". Officials refused to tell Forum 18 who had initiated the decision to strip Kim of Russian citizenship. Asked what would happen if he does not want to go to Uzbekistan or if Uzbekistan refuses to take him, one official would say only that "It is a court decision" (see below).

Kim was on 19 June 2017 convicted of "organising extremist activity" by meeting with other Muslims to study the works of the late Turkish Muslim theologian Said Nursi. He was jailed for three years and nine months in a labour camp ("correctional colony"). This was reduced (at the rate of one day in detention to one and a half days' imprisonment) by the length of time he had already spent in detention before and during the trial, and during an unsuccessful appeal. The trial judge made no mention at sentencing of the possibility of deportation upon Kim's completion of his labour camp term, which ended on 10 April 2019.

Officials took Kim to court immediately upon his release from his labour camp . A judge found him guilty of violating the residence requirements of the Russian Federation by not having all the correct documents. Kim did not have all the documents because officials had confiscated his Russian passport the previous day (see below).

Kim is in a foreigners' detention centre in Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East awaiting deportation to Uzbekistan (see below).

"From the very beginning it was all completely illegal," a fellow Muslim commented to Forum 18 on 21 May. Kim was tortured in pre-trial detention from December 2015, but against Russia's legally binding international obligations, no arrests or prosecutions of the officials who tortured Kim, or those who facilitated the torture, are yet known to have happened (see below).

Kim's lawyer told Forum 18 this is the first time he has heard that officials have stripped a convicted Nursi reader of Russian citizenship (see below).

Russia is not party to a United Nations convention, and has not ratified a Council of Europe convention, which both prohibit stripping an individual of their only citizenship (see below).

Among other Muslims prosecuted for meeting with others to read Nursi's works, in February 2019 a court in Krasnoyarsk Region sent back the criminal case against Nursi reader Yevgeny Sukharev for further investigation. It remains unknown when this will be resubmitted (see below).

Investigators issued a fresh criminal indictment on 20 May 2019 against a Nursi reader in Krasnoyarsk, Denis Zhukov. No trial date has yet been set (see below).

Another Muslim who met with others to read Nursi's works, Komil Odilov, was released in March 2019 after serving nine months of his two-year labour camp sentence. He will spend the eight years to 2027 under restricted freedom, which among other restrictions means that he is not allowed outside his own home between the hours of 10 PM at night and 6 AM in the morning (see below).

Tortured in pre-trial detention, no arrests or prosecutions of torturers

Kim was held in pre-trial detention from December 2015 in Blagoveshchensk's Investigation Prison No. 1. While there, he was tortured, had his ribs broken, and suffered attempted rape. "Thank God, they did not succeed", a fellow Muslim who wished to remain anonymous told Forum 18 on 31 October 2017.

Immediately after Kim's December 2015 detention, "they put him in the so-called 'press hut', a special room where the necessary testimonies are beaten out [of inmates] by other detainees who are colluding with the prison administration", the Muslim stated. "They beat Kim very badly, so badly that they themselves were frightened – apparently the perpetrators overdid it. Naturally, he was not taken to hospital, because there everything would have been recorded. After this, he was not beaten so badly again, and was generally only threatened."

Against Russia's legally binding international obligations under the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, no arrests or prosecutions of the officials who tortured Muslim prisoner of conscience Kim, or those who facilitated the torture, are yet known to have happened. Similarly, no arrests or prosecutions of officials who tortured seven Jehovah's Witnesses in Surgut in February 2019 are known to have happened.

Other Muslim prisoners of conscience

Four Muslim prisoners of conscience who read Nursi's works with other Muslims are currently jailed in labour camps:

1, 2, 3) Ziyavdin Badirsoltanovich Dapayev, jailed for four years, and brothers Sukhrab Abdulgamidovich Kaltuyev and Artur Abdulgamidovich Kaltuyev, jailed for three years each, by a Makhachkala court in November 2017;

4) Ilgar Vagif-ogly Aliyev, jailed by Izberbash court for eight years in June 2018. This is the longest known jail term for such an alleged crime;

All these prisoners of conscience are also on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose assets banks are obliged to freeze (although small transactions are permitted).

Russian citizen stripped of passport, ordered deported

Blagoveshchensk Muslim Yevgeny Lvovich Kim (born 5 October 1974) has completed his sentence for "organising extremist activity" under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 and 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"), but has been deprived of his Russian citizenship, rendering him stateless, and ordered deported to Uzbekistan.

Kim is currently being held in a foreigners' detention centre in Khabarovsk. Conditions for him there are "excellent", an official of the detention centre claimed to Forum 18 on 22 May. "He has his own Koran, and can fast and pray."

Kim was born in Uzbekistan when it was part of the Soviet Union, but appears to have lived most of his adult life in Russia. He previously held a Soviet passport, his lawyer Sergei Sychyov told Forum 18 on 22 May. It is unknown when he will be expelled from the country, Sychyov added.

This appears to be the first time a Muslim convicted of reading Nursi's works has been stripped of Russian citizenship. Lawyer Sychyov remarked to Forum 18 that this is the first case in his experience.

Several other Russian Muslims who have been investigated or jailed for reading Nursi's works with other Muslims were also born in the Soviet Union outside the borders of the present-day Russian Federation. Among the present-day former Soviet countries these Russian Muslims were born in are Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. It is as yet unknown whether any of these Russian Muslims may be similarly punished by being also made stateless.

Kim was released on 10 April 2019 from Labour Camp No. 3 in Khabarovsk, where he had been imprisoned since August 2017. According to written court decisions, an inspector from the Railway District Department for Migration Issues (part of the Khabarovsk branch of the Interior Ministry) checked his documents on the morning of his release and found that he lacked the necessary documentation proving his right to be in Russia – officials had in fact seized his Russian passport on 9 April.

Kim appeared at Railway District Court on 10 April on charges of violating, as a stateless person, the residence regime of the Russian Federation, by failing to have or obtain such documents (Administrative Code Article 18.8, Part 1.1). Judge Natalya Taranushchenko found him guilty and sentenced him to deportation and a 3,000 Rouble fine. She also ordered that he be held in a migration detention centre until he could be removed from the country.

Kim appealed unsuccessfully against this ruling on 30 April 2019 at Khabarovsk Regional Court, according to the decision seen by Forum 18.

According to court documents, Kim received his Russian citizenship from the Sverdlovsk Region branch of the Interior Ministry in December 2005, gaining his passport in January 2006. As the authority which initially granted him citizenship, the Sverdlovsk Interior Ministry was therefore also responsible for revoking it. It did this on 29 January 2019, on the basis of a decision by the head of its Department for Migration Issues, Colonel Olga Petrova.

Forum 18 has been unable to establish who initiated the process of stripping Kim of his passport and expelling him from the country. The wording of the court verdicts suggests, however, that this additional punishment is directly related to his conviction for organising alleged "Nurdzhular" activity in Blagoveshchensk.

In the 30 April appeal verdict, Judge Yury Starkov cites the 2002 Citizenship Law's provision for annulling the decision to grant Kim citizenship on grounds of its having been taken on the basis of false information. The Judge highlighted the Citizenship Law's Article 22, Part 2, which states that the commission of a crime under Criminal Code Article 282.2 (as well as several other crimes) should be taken as equivalent to the communication of knowingly false information "regarding the obligation to comply with the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the legislation of the Russian Federation".

This implies that Kim is assumed to have had criminal intent when he applied for Russian citizenship in December 2005, despite the fact that "Nurdzhular" was not prohibited as an "extremist organisation" until April 2008, and Nursi's books did not even start to be banned in Russia until May 2007.

"His imprisonment may have had an impact on the decision"

Forum 18 called the Sverdlovsk Region branch of the Interior Ministry in Yekaterinburg on 22 May to ask why it had annulled Kim's Russian citizenship. A spokesperson for the Department for Migration Issues said that Colonel Olga Petrova was out of the office, and that in any case, all questions should be submitted in writing.

When Forum 18 telephoned the Department for Citizenship Issues there, Major Alyona Tretyakova said that she could not discuss an individual's personal details. She refused to discuss in general how citizenship could be annulled when such an action would leave a person stateless. She told Forum 18 to refer all questions to the press office. Telephones at the press office went unanswered when Forum 18 called on 22 May.

When Forum 18 asked the same questions of the Interior Ministry's Railway District Department of Migration Issues in Khabarovsk, an official replied that she could not explain why Kim's citizenship had been taken from him. "His imprisonment may have had an impact on the decision. I can't say who removed his citizenship. Our inspector informed him of the decision."

The official confirmed that Kim will be deported to Uzbekistan. Asked what would happen if he does not want to go to Uzbekistan or if Uzbekistan refuses to take him, she would say only that "It is a court decision". The official referred all other questions to the Interior Ministry's Department of Citizenship Issues in Khabarovsk, but Forum 18 was unable to reach anyone there.

Kim was convicted 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") and Criminal Code 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") by Blagoveshchensk City Court on 19 June 2017 (upheld on appeal on 24 August 2017). He was jailed for three years and nine months in a labour camp, reduced (at the rate of one day in detention to one and a half days' imprisonment) by the length of time he had already spent in detention before and during the trial and appeal.

The judge made no mention at sentencing of the possibility of deportation upon Kim's completion of his term.

Another Muslim who followed Kim's case told Forum 18 at the time that witnesses questioned in court "refused to corroborate the testimonies they had given during the preliminary investigation, explaining that they had not said these things [and] that they had been interrogated in handcuffs". Kim himself refused to admit any guilt throughout the investigation, did not recognise the existence of "Nurdzhular", and did not consider himself a member.

The second offence of which Kim was convicted – incitement of hatred – has since been partially decriminalised, Forum 18 notes.

Kim remains on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists", whose assets banks are obliged to freeze (although small transactions are permitted).

International conventions

In stripping Kim of his citizenship, and thereby leaving him stateless, Russia has failed to comply with two international Conventions aimed at preventing statelessness.

The 1961 United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness prohibits the stripping of citizenship from an individual if it would render them stateless, except in narrowly-defined circumstances. "A Contracting State shall not deprive a person of its nationality if such deprivation would render him stateless," Article 8, Part 1 declares. The only, narrowly-defined exceptions are in cases where the individual does not reside within the state or when an individual shows loyalty to another state. In such cases an individual has the right to a "fair hearing" to challenge any deprivation of citizenship. Russia has not, however, acceded to this Convention.

The Council of Europe's 1997 European Convention on Nationality notes in its principles in Article 4 that "statelessness shall be avoided" and that "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her nationality". Article 7, Part 3 declares that "A State Party may not provide in its internal law for the loss of its nationality" if the person concerned "would thereby become stateless", except if the individual has gained citizenship fraudulently. Russia signed the Convention in November 1997 but has never ratified it. It has therefore not come into force for Russia.

Sharypovo, Krasnoyarsk Region: Case to be resubmitted

On 28 February 2019, after 23 hearings at Sharypovo City Court, Judge Inna Gavritskaya sent back the case against Yevgeny Igoryevich Sukharev (born 9 April 1990) for further investigation. Prosecutors challenged her decision at Krasnoyarsk Regional Court on 7 May 2019, but this was unsuccessful.

Judge Gavritskaya pointed out in her ruling that the indictment failed to indicate when, where, and how Sukharev became aware of the ban on "Nurdzhular" and its activities

and yet decided to participate in them anyway, or the "factual circumstances" under which Sukharev became a member of the Krasnoyarsk cell of "Nurdzhular".

The judge also noted discrepancies between the dates of meetings given in Sukharev's indictment and those given in the written verdicts in other cases against readers of Nursi's works in Krasnoyarsk. Investigators also did not state exactly when and under what circumstances Sukharev received instructions to broaden "Nurdzhular"'s activities in Sharypovo.

The judge concluded that the charges against Sukharev had been issued in violation of the law, and that "in such circumstances, the court is deprived of the opportunity to impose a sentence or issue any other decision". Sharypovo Interdistrict Prosecutor's Office must now eliminate the violations and resubmit the charges.

According to Judge Gavritskaya's ruling, Sukharev is accused of participating in Nurdzhular since July 2014. During this time he studied theology in Turkey, allegedly brought copies of Nursi's books into Russia, and "took part in religious lessons, where he studied the teachings of Said Nursi" and "where excerpts from the 'Risale-i Nur' collection were read aloud in the Russian language and explanations of their meaning given, and also participated in collective discussion of what was read".

Later, investigators claim, Sukharev "organised the recruitment of pupils for religious lessons" in his home town of Sharypovo, "recognising the socially dangerous consequences in the form of dissemination among residents of Sharypovo of the ideology of this extremist organisation". He also allegedly read aloud, "on no fewer than two occasions", quotations from 'Risale-I Nur' in a Muslim prayer room in Sharypovo, "with the aim of promoting the ideology of [Nurdzhular] and gaining new adherents".

FSB security service agents arrested Sukharev on 24 March 2017, but did not have him placed in detention or under house arrest. His case reached court in March 2018. While prosecutors work on resubmitting their case against him, he will remain under travel restrictions.

Sukharev has not been added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists". It is unknown when proceedings may begin again.

Krasnoyarsk: Case delayed

The prosecution of Denis Vladimirovich Zhukov (born 22 February 1988) under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 also encountered delays, when prosecutors returned the case to the regional Investigative Committee for further work to be carried out. Investigators have now completed this, another Muslim following the case told Forum 18, and issued a fresh indictment on 20 May 2019.

FSB operatives initially arrested Zhukov on 23 August 2018 on board the Moscow-Krasnoyarsk train, on which he was returning home after a period spent abroad.

Investigators had Zhukov placed under house arrest for at least four months, but he has now been released under travel restrictions. He has not been added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists".

Zhukov stands accused of participating in alleged "Nurdzhular" gatherings in Krasnoyarsk on 23 October 2015 and 4 November 2015, according to the indictments of 31 August 2018 and 20 May 2019, seen by Forum 18. At these meetings, he "conducted training of attendees of the gathering in the form of reading banned literature from the Risale-i Nur collection of writings, and also explaining the essence of what was read".

Prosecutors charged Zhukov under Article 282.2, Part 2 ("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").

An ethnic Russian convert to Islam, Zhukov was friendly with other Krasnoyarsk residents who have recently been prosecuted for alleged involvement in "Nurdzhular", a fellow Muslim explained to Forum 18. These included Andrei Dedkov, Andrei Rekst, Sabirzhon Kabirzoda, and Yevgeny Sukharev.

According to the indictment, seen by Forum 18, investigators have submitted the case to the Central District Prosecutor's Office in Krasnoyarsk. It is therefore likely that Zhukov will stand trial at Central District Court, although it is unknown when proceedings may begin.

Krasnoyarsk Region Investigative Committee has repeatedly failed to answer Forum 18's questions about the case, both by telephone and in writing.

Novosibirsk: Released prisoner under restricted freedom to 2027

Imam Komil Olimovich Odilov (born 18 August 1975) was released from his labour camp on 25 March 2019 after serving about nine months of his two-year sentence (his term was reduced by the length of time he had spent in pre-trial detention at the rate of one day in detention to one and half days' imprisonment).

October District Court in Novosibirsk had convicted Odilov in June 2018 under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1.

Odilov will spend the eight years to 2027 under restricted freedom. This means that he must not leave Novosibirsk, and must present himself to probation authorities four times every month. He is also not allowed outside his own home between the hours of 10 PM at night and 6 AM in the morning.

This restriction causes Odilov particular difficulties at present, as it means he is unable to go to the mosque for night prayers during Ramadan, which began in early May, and so must pray at home.

At present, Odilov is also still on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists".

Prosecutors accused Odilov of organising a "cell" of "Nurdzhular" in Novosibirsk. He denied the charges and insisted that "Nurdzhular" does not exist and that he had never engaged in any "extremist" activity.

After being detained alongside several other Muslims at a Novosibirsk cafe, Odilov spent nearly ten months in detention before being released under travel restrictions in September 2016. A total of six Muslims from the city were charged, but Odilov was the only one to be brought to court.

Punished for meeting to study Islamic theologian's writings

Muslims who read the works of the late Turkish Muslim theologian Said Nursi meet in homes to study Islam without seeking state permission, with one or more talking about the theologian's writings. They also pray, eat, and drink tea together. The Russian authorities interpret such meetings as organised activity by "Nurdzhular", aimed at inciting hatred in society and undermining the constitutional order.

"Nurdzhular" (a Russification of the Turkish for "Nursi followers") was banned as an "extremist organisation" in April 2008. Muslims in Russia deny that this group has ever existed. Many Russian translations of Nursi's books have been banned as allegedly "extremist", despite their not calling for the violation of human rights.

Between June 2017 and July 2018, six Muslim men were jailed for periods of between two and eight years for meeting together to study Nursi's works. All were convicted under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of"), or Part 2 ("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").

Jehovah's Witnesses also prosecuted

Like Muslims who read Nursi's works, Jehovah's Witnesses also face prosecution under Criminal Code Article 282.2 Part 1 or Part 2. But unlike Nursi readers, some Jehovah's Witnesses are also being prosecuted under Criminal Code Article 282.3 ("Financing of extremist activity"). Offences under this article also incur large fines or prison terms of up to eight years.

The Investigative Committee, the FSB security service, the Interior Ministry's Centre for Countering Extremism, and other state bodies (including the Investigative Department of the Northern Fleet's Polyarny Flotilla) are known to have carried out armed raids on homes in 36 Russian regions between January 2018 and May 2019 (not counting Crimea and Sevastopol).

As of 22 May 2019, 182 Jehovah's Witnesses are known to be under criminal investigation. Of these, 28 are known to be in pre-trial detention, 28 under house arrest, and 71 under travel restrictions. Another 16 people have been placed under specific restrictions, such as not being allowed to go out at night or use the telephone. Four people are under an obligation to appear before investigators when summoned, and a further 35 are not thought to be under any restrictions (see forthcoming F18News article).

Two Jehovah's Witnesses have already been convicted: Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen who was sentenced to six years' imprisonment 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"), in February 2019; and Sergei Skrynnikov, who received a 350,000 Rouble fine on 1 April 2019. Christensen's appeal is due to end on 23 May; he is presently still in detention.

One Jehovah's Witness, Arkadya Akopyan, charged under Criminal Code 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"), was acquitted on grounds of the partial decriminalisation of the offence. Another, Yury Zalipayev, also had a charge under Criminal Code Article 282, Part 1 dropped, but remains on trial under Criminal Code Article 280, Part 1 ("Public calls for extremist activity").

Interview: An Orthodox perspective of religious persecution in Russia

New Europe (21.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2VPFGCh> -

New Europe (NE): What do you see, in terms of similarities, between the repression of religion during Communist times and religious intolerance today?

Petar Gramatikov (PG): As an Eastern Orthodox theologian from Bulgaria I would like to make the observation that in Eastern Europe during the period of state totalitarianism, there was some sympathy and a sense of solidarity with other religions and religious philosophies, including new religious movements like the Church of Latter Day Saints or Scientology, due to the common problems we experienced. This included an interest to enter into dialogue with these other ideologies. This may not have held true once the various Orthodox churches came to occupy a more dominant position in the post-Communist governments of their respective countries, but it was a reflection of commonality against an atheistic enemy.

Metropolitan John Pelushi of Korçë in Albania once said that we have to confront the variety of changes and not merely defend ourselves from them in order to find original and creative solutions as part of our global responsibility.

NE: How important do you think interfaith relations are?

PG: The need to engage with other faiths was a major landmark in the field of inter-religious dialogue and was determined at the World Council of Churches in 1977 at a meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where a group of Christians representing many different ecclesiastical traditions drew up Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies.

These guidelines now serve as the basis for inter-religious dialogue sponsored by the Council and many other churches around the world. They were first published in 1979. It should be noted that the statement and the guidelines touch religions more specifically than ideologies.

This is a conscious self-limitation because the sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies has more experience of dialogue with people of living faiths rather than the broader field of ideologies.

Some of the guidelines say that dialogue should be planned and undertaken ecumenically, wherever possible; dialogue should be pursued by sharing in common enterprises in community; Partners in dialogue should be aware of their ideological commitments.

It was also recommended that member churches should consider what action they can take in the following educational areas: Teaching programmes in theological seminaries and colleges to prepare Christian ministers with the training and sensitivity necessary for inter-religious dialogue; The development of church school materials for the study of people of other faiths and ideologies; The creative use of the media, radio, television etc., wherever possible, in order to reach a wider audience in efforts to expand understanding of people of other faiths and ideologies, etc.

NE: What are the standards we should all be aspiring to?

PG: The United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," states that "the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world."

Regarding human rights in the Orthodox tradition, at the Holy and Great Council in Crete, Fr. **Emmanuel Clapsis** stated that the Orthodox churches living in a global culture have, in principle, embraced democracy and human rights but they are still struggling to cope with the implications of living in a democratic and free society.

From the Orthodox perspective, the benefits come from interfaith cooperation and significant dialogue in an all-inclusive way through mutual questioning of the understanding partners have about themselves and others. His Holiness Ecumenical **Patriarch Bartholomew** reiterates both the importance of human rights and their basis in the divine image, by stating that Orthodox spiritual teaching assures us that Orthodox Christians must always respect the human rights of others.

NE: Do you think that Russia is correctly responding to these challenges today?

PG: While persecuted religious believers around the globe ultimately place their trust in their God, they also hope they are not forgotten by the free nations of the world.

Some months ago, a relevant question was posed to Russian President Vladimir Putin during a session of the Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, The question was in relation to Jehovah Witnesses being placed on the country's list of extremist organisations, ,” to which Putin replied that “This is complete nonsense and it is necessary to deal with this attentively...we must be much more liberal and treat representatives of all religions in the same way. (We must not) classify them as some kind of destructive or terrorist organisation.

We should remember, whether it be in Russia or elsewhere, that the state should not interfere in the religious life of its citizens. Everyone is free to believe or not to believe. **Sergey Hudiev** from the Russian Orthodox daily online edition PRAVMIR, recently wrote that “The persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses generates a number of severe side effects.”

The first of these side effects is the actual curtailment of religious freedom. This freedom means that a person can be a heretic (in the eyes of the Orthodox Church) – yet this will not affect his relations with the state in any way...One could even attribute the “extremism” of the Church in the same way – as being heresy.”

Jehovah's Witnesses make an interim summary of persecution in 2019

What has changed in Russia's religious life after sentencing of Dennis Christensen?

JW Russia (12.05.2019) - <https://bit.ly/30khRWG> - A genuine explosion of arrests for the faith began after a court sentenced a Jehovah's Witness to imprisonment for the first time in modern Russia. The sentence was issued by a district court of Orel on 6 February 2019. In the following three months, in 25 Russian cities, similar cases were opened (in 20 regions of Russia) and 74 believers were indicted or suspected, of whom 29 were put behind bars (some of the measures of restriction were later mitigated). One hundred forty-one families of believers were subjected to search in their own residence. At least seven believers complained of torture, including the use of electronic shock devices.

Arrests, searches, and interrogations in the past three months occurred in the following chronological order:

6 February: Saransk, Urai (Khanty-Mansi autonomous oblast), Berezovskii (Kemerovo oblast);
15 February: Surgut (Khanty-Mansi autonomous oblast);
19 February: Arkhangelsk;
25 February: Kurilsk (Sakhalin oblast);
27 February: Ulianovsk;
28 February: Nefteiugansk (Khanty-Mansi autonomous oblast);
13 March: Severodvinsk (Arkhangelsk oblast);
17 March: Luchegorsk (Primorie territory);
20 March: Magadan, Yalta (Crimea);
21 March: Zeya (Amur oblast);
26 March: Kirov, Cheliabinsk;
3 April: Porkhov (Pskov oblast);
10 April: Abakan;
16 April: Karpinsk (Sverdlovsk oblast);
19 April: Minusinsk (Krasnoïarsk territory), Sharypovo (Krasnoïarsk territory), Partizansk (Primorie territory), Novosibirsk;
22 April: Inozemtsevo (Stavropol territory);
25 April: Smolensk;
29 April: Dagomys (Krasnodar territory).

"The sentencing of Dennis Christensen evoked an international resonance and called attention to the illegitimacy of the brutal persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses on the part of the state," notes Yaroslav Sivulsky of the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses. "It is possible that we have observed the last desperate attempt to yet find something illegal in the activity of the Jehovah's Witnesses. However our believers are as far from extremism as heaven is from earth."

Meanwhile, raids have continued. On 8 May 2019, in Omsk, about five new searches occurred in homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. The total number of Russians subjected to criminal prosecution for their faith is 188 persons.

Law enforcement personnel erroneously take the religious profession of citizens as participation in the activity of an extremist organizations. This problem has received the attention of prominent public figures of Russia, the Council on Human Rights under the president of the RF, the president of the RF, and also international organizations—the Foreign Policy Service of the European Union, observers at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the office of the United Nations high commissioner for human rights. Jehovah's Witnesses have nothing at all to do with extremism and they insist on their own complete innocence. The government of Russia has often declared that the decisions of the Russian courts for the liquidation and ban of organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses "do not make an assessment of the religious teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses and they do not contain a restriction or a ban on the profession of the aforementioned teaching individually." (tr. by PDS, posted 13 May 2019, <https://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/>)

Four Jehovah's Witnesses arrested and sentenced to prison terms in Smolensk

JW in Russia/ Russia Religion News (02.05.2019) - On 26 April 2019, the Lenin district court of Smolensk put three local believers behind bars: 36-year-old Ruslan Korolev, 41-year-old Valery Shalev, and 60-year-old Viktor Malkov. The day before, for another time, widespread searches were conducted in homes of citizens whom local law enforcement suspects of professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. A criminal case was opened

on the basis of part 2 of article 282.2 of the CCRF. The case is being investigated by the investigation department of the Russian directorate of the FSB for Smolensk oblast.

In all, on 25 April 2019 about three searches were conducted in Smolensk. For example, Valery Shalev was arrested by security forces near his workplace. He was taken home, where in the course of two hours a search was conducted. After the search, he was placed in a detention cell of the internal affairs department for Smolensk district.

This is now at least the second such criminal case. The first became known on 7 October 2018 when the FSB, along with the center for combating extremism and a rapid response team, conducted searches in believers' homes and arrested two women, Natalia Sorokina and Maria Troshina, who spent more than six months behind bars. Now, while the women have been under house arrest, a new case has been opened and another three persons have been imprisoned in a SIZO.

It is noteworthy that on 18 December 2016, in Smolensk, about 15 armed OMON troops, investigators, and police officers entered a house of worship of Jehovah's Witnesses on Pushkin St., when a service with about 60 believers participating was going on. Law enforcement personnel deliberately entered a rest room and acted as if they discovered a brochure that was included in the list of extremist materials. By that time evidence had already accumulated to the effect that law enforcement personnel and persons cooperating with them were systematically planting forbidden items on believers. [. . .] (tr. by PDS, posted 2 May 2019)

On 1 May 2019, a court in Smolensk sent 30-year-old Evgeny Deshko to jail for two months; he was suspected of professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. The man was arrested on 29 April 2019 in Dagomys of Krasnodar territory and transported to Smolensk.

According to preliminary information, Evgeny Deshko fell into the field of vision of Smolensk law enforcement in the context of the criminal prosecution of Valery Shalev and other adherents of the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses in Smolensk. A criminal case was also opened on the basis of part 2 of article 282.2 of the CCRF.

Sources: - <https://www.jw-russia.org/news/19050216-813.html>,
<https://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/190502a.html>

Jehovah's Witness in pretrial custody in Krasnoyarsk territory

Believer imprisoned for two months for conversations on religious topics in Sharypov

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia (26.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2vxWkvr> - On 24 April 2019, Inga Gavritskaia, a judge of the Sharypov city court of Krasnoyarsk territory, ordered the imprisonment for a term of two months of the 28-year-old driver of a power station, Anton Ostapenko. He was arrested during widespread searches in believers' homes that were conducted throughout the city on 19 April. In the opinion of the investigation, the believer is an "arranger of the activity of an extremist organization." (part 1, article 282.2 CCRF).

The case was opened on 19 April 2019 by the senior investigator of the special department for Sharypov district of the Investigation Department of the Investigative Committee of Russia (SKR) for Krasnoyarsk territory, Yu. Fedyniak. The charge is based

on evaluation of conversations about the Bible that were recorded on a hidden video camera in the home of one of the believers.

In considering the petition of the investigator for imprisoning Ostapenko, the judge ignored the arguments of the lawyer that during the search in his apartment, no weapons or traces of a crime were found. It made no impact on the court's decision even that the defendant is described positively by everybody who knows him, he never has been criminally liable, and he cares for his disabled mother.

The searches on 19 April 2019 in Sharypov were carried out in a total of ten homes of believers. They followed a similar pattern: groups of personnel of the FSB and the Investigative Committee blockaded peaceful, unarmed people in their homes, took from them all electronic equipment and Bibles (including in the synodal translation), forbade them from conversing with one another, and interrogated them. Several were arrested and taken to the investigation department. Believers reported that they experienced great stress and some became ill.

Law enforcement personnel in Sharypov, copying their colleagues from other cities of Russia, came to the incorrect conclusion that ordinary religious activity of citizens (reading the Bible, prayers) are a "continuation of the activity of an extremist organization." International organizations, the Council on Human Rights, and even the president of Russia have frequently called attention to this pernicious practice and its sad consequences.

Russia charges Baptist pastor in a sign that its religious clampdown could be spreading

By Matthew Luxmoore

Radio Free Europe (24.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2PtO8FV> - In Verkhnebakansky, a town just outside Novorossiisk on Russia's Black Sea Coast, Baptists gather in a small house with a set of windows in the shape of a Christian cross.

Their presence in the Krasnodar region goes back 110 years, the past 25 of which -- since the Soviet collapse and the opening up of religious expression -- have seen a faith long repressed by authorities flourish once again.

So it was a shock when, on April 7, as some 50 congregants celebrated Annunciation, law enforcement agents stormed in and interrupted the service.

According to presbyter Yevgeny Kokora, the choir temporarily halted its rendition of Jesus Is My Lighthouse while the pastor pleaded with the officers. They wrote up a report and left just as the service was drawing to a close.

The following day, Kokora went with 71-year-old pastor Yury Korniyenko to the prosecutor's office in Novorossiisk, seeking to file an official complaint. They were told the prosecutor wouldn't be taking visitors for the next three weeks. The local branch of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) heard the two Baptists out, Kokora told RFE/RL, but made no promises.

On April 9, Korniyenko received a court summons and was subsequently charged with engaging in illegal missionary work. His case will be heard this week, and he faces a hefty fine if convicted.

"This is the first time we've had such troubles," Kokora told RFE/RL in a telephone interview. "I don't understand who needs this, who's playing this card."

While freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed in Russia, the relevant legislation names Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism as the country's four traditional, protected religions. Others with smaller presences in Russia, including denominations like Baptists, have been subjected to increased scrutiny in recent years.

In 2016, Russia introduced a package of laws outlawing missionary work outside officially designated places of worship, part a broader crackdown on minority faiths operating in the country.

The new laws have been cited as necessary measures in the state's fight against extremism and have led to charges against hundreds of religious activists across the country and, in 2017, to an outright ban on Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian denomination with headquarters in the United States.

Roman Lunkin, a religious expert at the Russian Academy of Sciences, told RFE/RL that the Baptists in the Krasnodar region are falling victim to "not so much an expansion" of the government's campaign against minority religions as "its logical continuation."

The implication, he said, is that the clampdown will spread.

So far, the Baptist church in Russia has kept comparatively under the radar, despite a flock that Lunkin estimates at more than 250,000 people. Its members stand out from those of other minority faiths through their strong "civic stance," Lunkin said -- many are community leaders or members of local government.

But in November, its adherents were shaken by news that a pastor in Tatarstan had been fined 20,000 rubles (\$310) for organizing an unsanctioned public gathering: A group of Baptists had assembled that June to watch him baptize their newest member in the Kama River.

Kokora said he believes the campaign against his congregation is a largely local affair, a case of officials trying to curry favor with their superiors. He noted that Novorossiisk has seen several similar cases in recent weeks, but faith groups in other parts of Krasnodar have been largely left alone.

In March, the [Pentecostal meeting house in Novorosiisk was torn down](#) after officials declared it an unauthorized construction. Seventh-Day Adventists in the city have been banned from gathering for worship, Kokora said. They now travel to Gelendzhik, 50 kilometers away.

On March 1, law enforcement officers in Novorossiisk detained two Mormons -- Americans Kole Brodowski, 20, and David Gaag, 19 -- on suspicion of violating Russian immigration law. [They were released two weeks later](#) and deported to the United States.

The Baptist congregation in Verkhnebakansky has felt pressure from the authorities grow over the past year, according to Kokora. He said they've had weekly calls from officials demanding summaries of the latest sermon delivered, as well as reports on attendance.

On April 21, the deputy head of the Russian Baptist Union, Viktor Ignatenkov, visited Verkhnebakansky to discuss the April 7 incident and the possible legal repercussions for local church members. The meetings "gave everyone a sense of confidence in God's intercession," [the church said in a statement on April 23](#).

Kokora, who spent four years working in the Novorossiisk administration and was a member of the city's civic council, said he is reluctant to try and leverage his official

contacts and plans instead to take the legal route by appealing to the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights in Moscow.

"We have laws, and we have courts. Let's fix this through a legal framework," he said.

That council may be the last hope for groups who feel targeted for their faith.

On December 11, in a meeting with council members, President Vladimir Putin suggested that official policy toward some religions should be liberalized.

"We probably can, and even at some point should, be much more liberal toward representatives of various religious sects," he said.

[Putin ordered](#) Supreme Court Justice Vyacheslav Lebedev to oversee the drafting of a general legal framework for adjudicating cases brought against religious groups. The deadline is July 1.

Kokora is among thousands of believers vesting their hopes in the initiative as a chance to reverse what they see as a tightening of the screws on Russia's minority faiths.

In the meantime, he awaits the court's judgment.

"If this case becomes a precedent, then all our congregations will fall like a house of cards," he said. "The administration's hands will be untied."

CRIMEA: Occupiers want to set up 'rehabilitation center' for Hizb Ut-Tahrir Crimean Muslims

Human Rights Without Frontiers is concerned that Russia might follow the example of China with its "reeducation centers" in which 1 million Muslims are indoctrinated

RISU (04.08.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Ihaj0t> - The Kremlin-controlled authorities of the annexed Crimea plan to open a "rehabilitation center" for supporters of the Islamic party Hizb ut-Tahrir.

This is reported by the so-called MP of the State Duma of Russia from Crimea Ruslan Balbek, Ukrayinska Pravda wrote, with reference to RIA Novosti. The adherents of the organization -- which Russia deems extremist -- are supposed to be freed from criminal liability if they officially "renounce destructive political and religious views after a course of psychological and spiritual rehabilitation".

The "Rehabilitation Center" is to be placed at the "Religious Administration of Muslims of Crimea".

"Extremism and its doctrine need to be burned away not only by the strength of weapons, but also by spiritual education. The extremist organizations forbidden in Russia continue to secretly operate in Crimea, although most of them are law-abiding, but there are those who fall under the influence of these extremist sects," said Balbek.

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

Increased persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses

Searches, seizures, fear tactics in Chelyabinsk Region

JW Russia (26.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2FumhRj> - On March 26, 2019, in the town of Yemanzhelinsk (Chelyabinsk Region) at about 7 a.m., there was a soft knock at the door of the apartment where the couple Pavel and Elena Popov live. When they opened the door, they saw about 10 people in masks with assault weapons and a sledge hammer for breaking the door out.

The Popovs were informed that a search would be conducted in their home due to the fact that they profess the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their computer, phones, tablets, family photos, books and international passports were confiscated. After the search, the pair was taken away for questioning in another city. According to law enforcement officers, whether they will be detained, "depends on how they will cooperate." (Law enforcers across the country threaten believers to intimidate them into incriminating themselves or others by "confessing" that they are carrying out extremist activities.)

Earlier, after the Jan. 11, 2007, decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), the Russian Federation admitted that it had violated the rights of 150 deaf Jehovah's Witnesses of Chelyabinsk due to the disruption of their worship, and paid 30,000 euros for moral damages and 60,544 euros for legal costs. The ECHR ruling on this case, known as *Kuznetsov and Others v. Russia*, states: "It is undeniable that the collective study and discussion of religious texts by the members of the religious group of Jehovah's Witnesses was a recognized form of manifestation of their religion in worship and teaching."

New searches and detentions in Kirov

JW Russia (26.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2HINof4> - On the morning of March 26, 2019, a wave of new searches began in Kirov in the homes of citizens thought to be Jehovah's Witnesses. It is known there were searches in at least 10 apartments. Several people were detained and a criminal investigation is proceeding against Aleksandr Shamov, 58; Andrey Shchepin, 27, and Evgeniy Udintsev, 70.

Earlier, in October 2018, after raids on the houses of believers in Kirov, five people were arrested and sent to the detention center. Currently, three of them are under house arrest, and two have been languishing in prison for 169 days, one a citizen of Poland, Andrzej Oniszczyk. The only basis for prosecution is their confession. (The Polish consulate keeps track of what is happening with Andrzej Oniszczyk.)

In Primorsky territory, the court imprisons two Witnesses

JW Russia (21.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2U7WJD3> - On March 19, 2019, a court decided to send two Jehovah's Witnesses, Sergey Sergeev, who is 63 years of age, and Yuriy Belosludtsev, both from the village of Luchegorsk, to a detention center. They have been ordered to remain there for two months. Originally detained during searches carried out on March 17, 2019, they were taken to the town of Dalnerechensk. According to preliminary information received after the court hearing, they will be held in a jail facility in the town of Spassk-Dalny.

Case of Sergeev and Belosludtsev in Luchegorsk

Region: Primorsky Region

Locality: Luchegorsk

Case number: [to be determined]

Current stage: preliminary investigation (pre-trial proceedings)

Suspected of: [to be determined]

Article of the Russian Criminal Code: [to be determined]

Case initiated: [to be determined]

Investigating: [to be determined]

New criminal cases for faith along the Chinese border

JW Russia (21.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2U0AHCU> - On March 21, 2019, at least five searches were carried out in the town of Zeya (Amur Region) in the homes of local residents who are considered to be Jehovah's Witnesses. A criminal case was initiated under the article on the organization of the activities of an extremist organization. Konstantin Moiseenko, 42, was named as a suspect and ordered not to leave.

Shortly before, on March 17, 2019, searches of the homes of believers were held in Luchegorsk(Primorsky Territory). Local residents Yuriy Belosludtsev and Sergey Sergeev were sent to the detention center. They were accused of violating the article on the organization of the activities of an extremist organization on the grounds that the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in an all-inclusive ruling banned 396 organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses, including the local religious organization in Luchegorsk.

Searches and criminal case for faith in Severodvinsk

JW-Russia (20.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2HV3EJh> - On March 13, 2019, in Severodvinsk (Arkhangelsk Region), searches were carried out in the homes of at least seven citizens suspected of practicing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. A criminal case was opened against Vladimir Teterin, 61, and Sergey Potilitsyn, 37. Vladimir Teterin signed a recognizance agreement promising to appear in court at a future date.

Searches were conducted by several Federal Security Service (FSB) investigators, including P. Yuriev, I. Kozodubov and I. Mironov. The Severodvinsk City Court sanctioned the searches. Some Witnesses were taken to the city of Arkhangelsk, where they were interrogated at the FSB Directorate. After the interrogations, which continued until the late night hours, all were released.

Case of Teterin and Others in Severodvinsk

Region: Arkhangelsk Region

Locality: Severodvinsk

Case number: 11907110001000008

Current stage: preliminary investigation (pre-trial proceedings)

Suspected of: 282.2(1): according to the investigation, together with others he conducted religious services, which is interpreted as organising the activity of an extremist organisation (with reference to the decision of the Russian Supreme Court on the liquidation of all 396 registered organisations of Jehovah's Witnesses)

Article of the Russian Criminal Code: 282.2(1)

Case initiated: [to be determined]

Investigating: Investigative Department of the Directorate of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia for the Arkhangelsk Region

Mass searches in homes of witnesses in Magadan

JW-Russia (20.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2CQ1pDN> - The morning of March 20, 2019, for Jehovah's Witnesses in Magadan began with their homes being invaded by FSB officers. At least four residences were known to be searched, but possibly five more houses were searched and their occupants taken to the offices of the Federal Security Service (FSB) for interrogation. According to law enforcement officers, nine new criminal cases were initiated in the city for the Witnesses' belief in God. Earlier, on May 30, 2018, a criminal case was opened in the city and four believers were sent to prison for several months. Now they are under house arrest.

During searches, all electronic devices were seized from citizens: tablets, smartphones, laptops, cameras, all memory cards and flash drives, as well as notebooks and other personal items. The search in the Solntsev family home took place in the presence of their nine-year-old child.

Two U.S. Mormons released from custody in Russia return home

RFE/RL (21.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Tob5ui> - Two Mormons who were detained in Russia and accused of violating immigration laws have been released and are returning home to the United States.

Americans Kole Brodowski, 20, and David Gaag, 19, "have been released" and were returning to the United States, Eric Hawkins, a spokesman for the U.S.-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said in an e-mail to RFE/RL on March 20.

Russian media reports said the two men had been deported. The regional news site Novaya Kuban quoted unnamed sources as saying they took a predawn flight from the southern city of Krasnodar to Istanbul and would travel from there to New York.

Brodowski and Gaag, described by the church as "volunteers," were **detained by the authorities** on March 1 "while engaged in a meeting at a local meetinghouse" in the Black Sea coastal city Novorossiisk, Hawkins told RFE/RL in a previous statement.

A court in Novorossiisk ruled on March 7 that the two U.S. citizens must be deported for what it called violations of immigration laws.

The detentions come with growing scrutiny within Russia on religious groups that don't qualify as one of the four formally recognized religions.

Freedom of religion is formally guaranteed in Russia, but the Russian government and the dominant Russian Orthodox Church frown on proselytizing by foreign-based religious communities.

Russian law sets out Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism as the country's four traditional religions, and other faiths -- including U.S.-based Christian communities -- often face discrimination or restrictive action by state authorities.

Russia outlawed the Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017, declaring it "extremist," and the group says that seven of its members in Russia were **tortured by law enforcement officers** in the Siberian city of Surgut in mid-February.

A Danish Jehovah's Witness, Dennis Christensen, was convicted on February 6 of "organizing the activity of an extremist organization" and sentenced to six years in prison by a court in the western city of Oryol.

In its annual report on human rights around the world, issued on March 13, the U.S. State Department said that human rights abuses in Russia included "severe restrictions on religious freedom."

While in custody, Brodowski and Gaag "were treated very well and maintained regular contact with their families and mission president," Hawkins said in the March 20 e-mail.

"The church is closely monitoring conditions in Russia for all volunteers and will continue to fully comply with Russian law," he said.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also known as the Mormon church, has long been a presence in Russia, with members teaching English classes and proselytizing.

According to church figures, registered Mormons grew from 300 in 1991 -- the year the Soviet Union collapsed -- to more than 14,000 a decade later. Today, the church claims 23,000 adherents in Russia.



Brodowski was "nearing the end of his service" and would return home to the state of California, Hawkins said.

Gaag "will return to the United States for a short time, receive any needed support, and then continue his service in a new mission," he said.

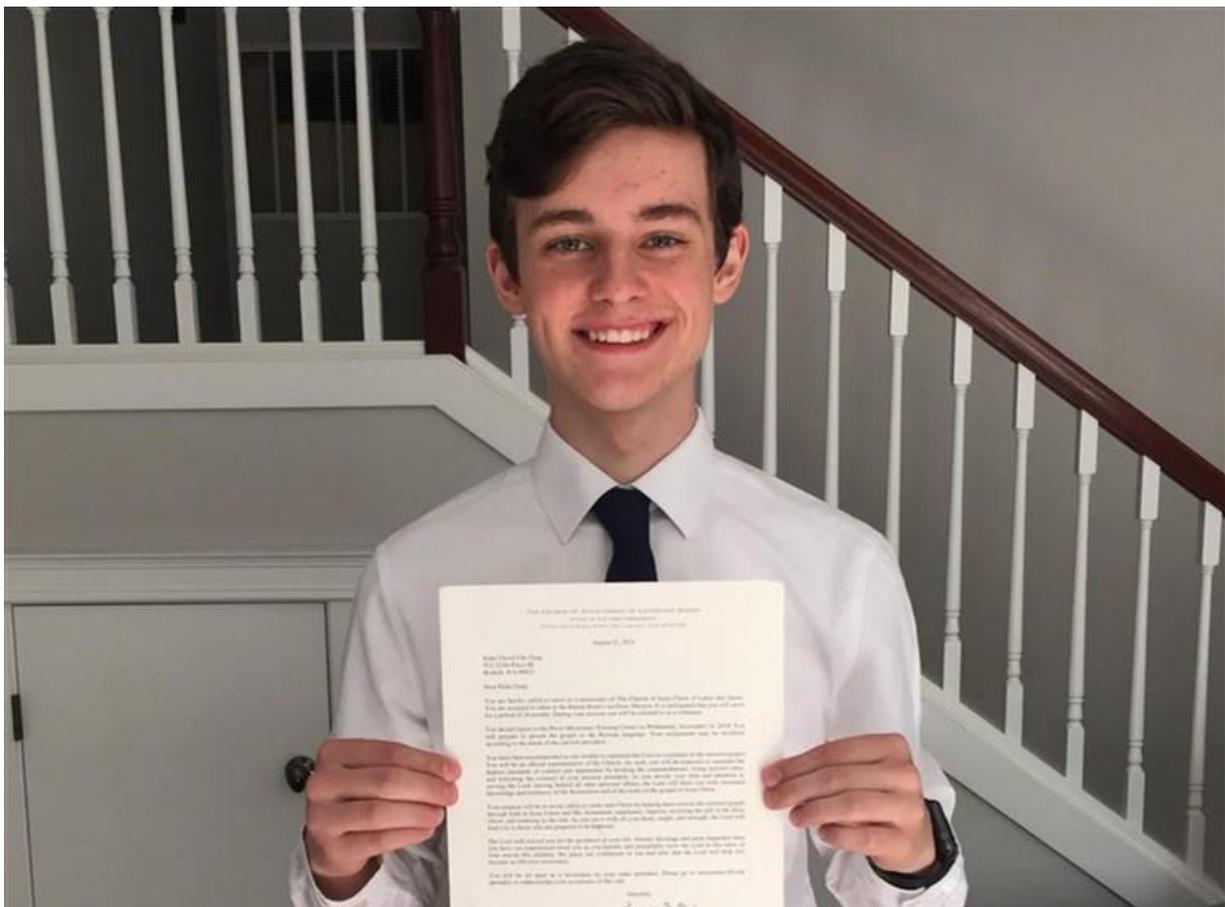
Russia releases two American Mormon missionaries detained for almost three weeks

Strict anti-terrorism regulations passed in 2016 limit the activities of religious groups in Russia

By Caroline Radnofsky and Allison Miller

Two American members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were detained in Russia for nearly three weeks have been released and are on their way home to the United States, a church spokesman said Wednesday.

Kole Brodowski, 20, and David Gaag, 19, were arrested on March 1 in Novorossiysk, 760 miles south of Moscow, during a meeting, said Eric Hawkins, a spokesman for the church.



David Gaag, 19, a Mormon missionary from North Bend, Washington, was returning home to America on Mar. 20, 2019. via Facebook

Brodowski, who was nearing the end of his two-year service, will return home to Garden Grove, California, while Gaag, who is from North Bend, Washington, "will return to the

United States for a short time, receive any needed support, and then continue his service in a new mission," Hawkins said.



Kole Brodowski, 20, a Mormon missionary from Garden Grove, California, was returning home to America on Mar. 20, 2019. via Facebook

According to the Russian state agency Interfax, a court in the Krasnodar territory fined the men on March 15 and ruled to expel them on the grounds of "carrying out missionary work by a foreign citizen in violation of the requirements of the legislation on freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and religious associations."

Local law enforcement did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Hawkins said that while in detention, the volunteers were "treated very well and maintained regular contact with their families and mission president."

150 Jehovah's Witnesses under investigation

JW Headquarters (19.03.2019) – Almost two years after the ban of their movement in Russia, 150 Jehovah's Witnesses are currently under investigation. Already in 2019 Russian law enforcement has conducted raids on JWs in 10 cities in 6 regions (in 2018 Russian agents conducted 280 searches in about 40 regions throughout the Federation).

Latest figures regarding JWs facing criminal charges throughout Russia:

Pretrial Detention: 24

House arrest: 26

Ban on activities: 5

Recognizance: 55

Wanted: 4

Total under investigation: 150

Another EU citizen detained in Russia: Andrzej Oniszczyk from Poland

Andrzej Oniszczyk, 50, has been kept in solitary confinement for over five months, and is not permitted to lie down from 06:00 to 21:00. He is only allowed to take a shower with hot water once a week for 15 minutes. The administration of the detention center in Kirov refuses to allow Andrzej to have a Bible.

For the five months Andrzej has been detained, his wife, Anna, has not been allowed to visit him and has only communicated with him by letter. She has submitted several requests to visit Andrzej in prison; however the investigator in Kirov has repeatedly denied her requests. Typically prisoners in Russia can have visits from close family members, so it is unclear why such extreme action has been taken to keep Anna from seeing her husband.

You may recall that Andrzej was arrested on Oct 9, 2018, when local police and masked special-forces raided 19 homes and one former place of worship for JWs in Kirov, Russia. Andrzej is being accused of "extremist" activity for simply singing biblical songs, improving the skills of missionary work, and studying religious literature.

At the outset, Andrzej Oniszczyk was forced to sign a document under duress wherein he agreed to refuse visits by the Poland Embassy, so the embassy was initially unable to contact/assist. However, after several requests by the embassy, they have finally been allowed to visit/assist Andrzej. The address where Andrzej is being held: FKU SIZO-1, UFSIN of Russia, Kirov Region, ul. Mopra, d. 1, Kirov, 610004. Andrzej's pretrial detention has been extended twice (now through April 2, 2019).

A total of seven men in Kirov are facing criminal charges for practicing their faith. Four men (44-yr-old Maksim Khalturin, 66-yr-old Vladimir Korobeynikov, 26-yr-old Andrey Suvorkov, and 41-yr-old Yevgeniy Suvorkov) had been arrested in October 2018 and held in pretrial along with Andrzej. Yevgeniy continues in pretrial detention, however the three others have been released to house arrest. Two other men (63-yr-old Vladimir Vasilyev and 25-yr-old Vladislav Grigorenko) from Kirov have been under investigation since January 21, 2019 but are not yet under any restrictions.

BIO: Andrzej was born October 3, 1968 in the city of Białystok in northeastern Poland. After graduating from school, he became a lathe operator. Andrzej enjoys reading Russian literature, especially Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn, and Pasternak. In 1997, he moved to Russia and worked for himself in the city of Kirov. There he met Anna, and they married in 2002.

Anna, Andrzej Oniszczyk's wife, has agreed to talk to journalists (Polish or Russian only). Her phone number +7(961) 748 2088 (via Telegram or Signal).

Sergey Skrynnikov under threat of three years in prison

On the heels of the Zheleznodorozhnyi District Court of Oryol sentencing Dennis Christensen to six years in prison, another one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Sergey Skrynnikov, also from Oryol is being criminally tried at the same court for his peaceful worship as one of Jehovah's Witnesses and a verdict is expected on April 1, 2019.

On 18 March, prosecutor Nadezhda Naumova recommended that the Court sentence 56-year-old Sergey to three years in prison followed by one year of additional restrictions for so-called extremist activity. Closing statements by the defense will be next Thursday March 28, with the court's verdict will be at 10am on Monday April 1.

For more information, please contact Yaroslav Sivulskiy in Russia: (ysivulsk@jw.org; call or WhatsApp [+7 985 359 34 10](tel:+79853593410); [+371 2 0044105](tel:+37120044105)).

Mormons worry about a fate like Jehovah's Witnesses

Kuban Mormons fear repressions against their church

Russia Religion News (11.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2TKVzNC> - The decision of the Krasnodar territory court about the deportation of two American Mormons is connected with the start of repressions against this church in Russia, a believer from Novorossiisk and the lawyer Sergei Glizuntsa suggest. In the case there is no evidence that the missionaries taught the English language under the guise of preaching, the defense attorney insists.

Kavkazskii Uzel has reported that on 2 March a court in Novorossiisk ordered the deportation to the U.S.A. of adherents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints David Udo Hague and Cole Davis Brodovsky. The Krasnodar territory court left that decision in force, agreeing with the conclusion that they taught the English language under the guise of religious activity. The American citizens themselves did not acknowledge guilt, explaining that they merely conducted conversations in the English language on abstract topics.

In the opinion of Hague and Brodovsky's lawyer, Sergei Glizuntsa, the decision of the two courts may speak of the start of repressions against Mormons in Russia. "I think that it went through all instances like the Jehovah's Witnesses* were treated," he told a Kavkazskii Uzel correspondent.

On 20 April 2017, the Russian Supreme Court granted the petition of the Ministry of Justice regarding the liquidation of all Russian organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses* as extremist and on 16 August the "Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia*" and all of its local affiliates wound up on the list of forbidden organizations, a report prepared by Kavkazskii Uzel, "Jehovah's Witnesses*--extremists or victims of injustice?" notes.

This same fear was also expressed to a Kavkazskii Uzel correspondent by a Mormon woman from Novorossiisk, Irina. "I think that they are beginning to persecute us like the Jehovah's Witnesses* and this is the 'first swallow.' Our organization is not prohibited in Russia, but most likely this is not for long. The Russian Orthodox Church has already

declared that we 'warp the minds' of youth. This is not so. We advocate a healthy lifestyle and family values," the woman declared.

At the meeting with which law enforcement found fault, a discussion was conducted in the English language about the traditions and culture of Mormons, she explained. Such conversations fall under the definition of volunteer and missionary activity, which Hague and Brodovsky indicated were the goals of their coming to Russia, the believer is sure.

"The guys came in order to become acquainted with our country. They are very open and they were helping someone all the time. They worked in social shelters, helped the elderly, and made repairs in the apartments of disabled persons. During meetings in the house of worship they described their own country. Our youth had the opportunity to talk a bit in English in order to practice," Irina, a parishioner of the church, reported.

The guilt of Hague and Brodovsky was not proven, the lawyer declared.

There was no evidence of illegal educational activity in the administrative case, Glizuntsa declared. He said the young people simply met with Russians in the meetinghouse and talked about America and asked them to talk about themselves. On 1 March, personnel of the Federal Migration Service came to the meetinghouse and took descriptions from all persons present in the meeting, but there was no audio recording of the meeting itself, the lawyer noted.

"There were no syllabi, no homework assignments, no payment for these services. It turns out that there is only one indicator of their illegal activity—they corrected a person who spoke English incorrectly. I do not consider that teaching, because I also correct anybody who speaks Russian incorrectly," the lawyer noted.

The case is based on the words of one of the Russians who perceived the meeting as an educational process, Sergei Glizuntsa reported. "But there was neither a blackboard on which one could write or alphabet to study nor notebooks in order to write notes; there was nothing," the lawyer emphasized.

He said that he intends to appeal the decision of the Krasnodar territory court, which left in force the decision of the court of the first instance. "We will appeal further, to the Supreme Court. So that there will not be a decision of a court and such situations will not arise with other representatives of religious organizations," Glizuntsa explained.

At the present time, the Mormons are being held in a special facility for foreign citizens in Gulkevich district. They have not complained about the conditions of detention. They were allowed to telephone their parents and they are fed three times a day, their attorney explained. "Unfortunately, there are no deadlines for the deportation. People from the near abroad are kept there for six months. There is an issue of paperwork and the decision from the territory court has just today been sent for implementation," Sergei Glizuntsa complained.

*The organization is considered to be extremist and its activity is prohibited in Russia by decision of a court. (tr. by PDS, posted 13 March 2019)

Krasnodar Territorial Court upholds deportation of 2 U.S. religious missionaries from Russia

Interfax Religion (07.03.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2HhwS5v> - Krasnodar: The Krasnodar Territorial Court ruled on Thursday to decline appeals against a Novorossiysk court judgment ordering that two U.S. citizens be fined and deported from Russia for violating border regulations.

The Krasnodar Territorial Court heard appeals against rulings by Novorossiysk's Primorsky District Court finding Kole Brodowski and David Udo guilty of violating border regulations.

The foreigners are currently being held at a detention facility for individuals subject to administrative arrest in the town of Gulkevichi, the Krasnodar Territory.

It had been reported earlier that two U.S. citizens introducing themselves as volunteers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church) had been detained in Russia.

One of two U.S. Mormons detained in southern Russia to be deported, a second may follow

HRWF (07.03.2019) – On 2 March, two U.S. citizens affiliated with the Mormon Church, Kole Brodowski and David Udo Hague, were found guilty of breaching border regulations (Part 2, Article 18.8 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses) and put in a special facility for persons under administrative arrest, which is situated in the town of Gulkevichi. They are pending deportation from Russia.

The Primorye District Court in Novorossiysk sentenced Brodowski to an administrative fine of 2,000 rubles and deportation from Russia, an Interfax correspondent reported from the courtroom.

According to the investigators, the foreigners had engaged in teaching activity in Novorossiysk, which did not coincide with the purpose of arriving in Russia.

They told the court they had come to Russia as volunteers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

Brodowski's lawyer Sergey Gliznutsa appealed the ruling.

In Kole Brodowski's own words, he had come to Russia as a missionary, taking part in official events of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

"The charter of this religious organization, which is registered by the Russian Justice Ministry, envisages various cultural and educational events, such as meetings and debates with foreign citizens in a foreign language," Gliznutsa said.

"The police drew conclusions about the alleged educational activity of the U.S. citizen from a five-minute conversation conducted in English. The fact of payment for [educational] services was not established, no assignments or textbooks were given at the meeting, and the participants did not take any notes or have any copybooks," the lawyer told the court.

According to a press release of Interfax issued today, the Krasnodar Territorial Court has upheld the ruling.

Nauvoo News said on Wednesday that the Church had confirmed the two men were arrested on Friday during a church meeting in Novorossiysk, approximately 1,000 miles south of Moscow.

In 2016, Russia officially banned religious missionaries under a questionable counter-terrorism law, which has been used on a large scale against Jehovah's Witnesses in the last two years. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said it is in compliance with the new law. The Church officially registers local workers as "volunteers," rather than missionaries.

Protestant attorney prompted Putin's order to Supreme Court

Russian President supports Vladimir Riakhovsky's suggestion to summarize practice on freedom of conscience, particularly application of Yarovaya law

Russia Religion News (22.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2TzAwgY> - On 21 February, on the basis of the results of the session of the Council on Human Rights, President V.V. Putin gave an order: "To recommend to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to conduct work aimed at the generalization of judicial practice in consideration by courts of cases on violation of legislation on freedom of conscience, freedom of religious confession, and on religious associations. Report—by 1 July 2019. Person responsible: V.M. Lebedev."

Vladimir Riakhovsky, a member of the Council on Human Rights, welcomed the order by the president of the RF. He said that work on generalizing the judicial practice will be conducted with the active participation of the Council on Human Rights and this will help to see the basic problems that arise within the context of application, principally, of the Yarovaya Law in its part regulating missionary activity, and also anti-extremism legislation.

On 11 December 2018, a session of the Council on Development of Civil Society and Human Rights was held in the Kremlin under the chairmanship of the head of state, Vladimir Putin.

The session began with a minute of silence in memory of Liudmila Alekseeva, a member of the Council on Human Rights and head of the Moscow Helsinki Group.

The session was devoted to issues of the violation of the rights of citizens of Russia abroad, the intensification of efforts of the state and society for eliminating incidents of illegitimate violence in places of incarceration, and other questions relating to the implementation of human rights and liberties in Russia.

Vladimir Riakhovsky, a member of the council and administrative partner of the Advocates Bureau of the Slavic Legal Center, voiced in front of the president the question of holding citizens who disseminate their convictions accountable as for missionary activity, and also other questions of the practice of implementation of legislation.

Vladimir Putin supported Vladimir Riakhovsky's suggestion of instructing the Supreme Court to analyze law enforcement practice with respect to this category of cases and to review the question of the legitimacy of the legal regulation of missionary activity introduced by the Yarovaya Law.

V. Riakhovsky: Vladimir Vladimirovich, thank you very much.

To be honest, this is the first time in six years that I have had a turn. I have two questions; I will try to be brief and save time.

In July 2016 a federal law was adopted under the name "On introducing additional measures for combating terrorism," commonly called the "Yarovaya Law."

This law also introduced changes in the law on freedom of conscience. A chapter on missionary activity was added to the law on freedom of conscience. A definition of missionary activity was given and a procedure was established for its implementation all the way to the point of stating that for a person to be able to speak about his convictions he must be authorized by a religious organization and have a document of a certain form.

Article 5.26, concerning the establishment of accountability, was introduced into the Code of Administrative Violations of Law. A year and a half have already passed and I would very much like to ask the initiators of this law: has it achieved the goal that its authors had? Has even one extremist been held accountable on the basis of this law?

But nevertheless law enforcement agencies have initiated and taken to court more than 600 administrative cases against representatives of various religious confessions with really only one exception—the largest one. These cases are as incredible as can be imagined.

Here is simply one clear example: in Nizhny Novgorod, a woman student, a citizen of one of the African countries, a student in the sixth year of medical university with barely a month remaining before state exams. She gives an interview to one of the internet channels and describes herself, her family, her childhood, and the fact that she has been a believing person since childhood, a Christian, and she also attends church in Russia and this helped her in her studies.

Two administrative cases were initiated against her. The first one was for violation of the rules of missionary activity, and she received a fine, and the second was for violation of the purposes of her stay in the Russian Federation. She did not arrive on a missionary visa but here she said something about her own convictions. And for the second case she was fined and expelled from the Russian Federation. It was good that the appellate court apparently had common sense: they did not cancel the rulings but they postponed her deportation until she got her diploma, in literally a few months.

What is interesting is that at the base of these cases lay the conclusion of experts, who perceived in this video covert appeals, covert missionary activity.

That is, you understand, what is the issue? Covert. There were no clear indicators of missionary activity. And why were there none? Because she was covert. And because of this she was held accountable.

I could cite a bunch of such cases, since this is within the circle of my professional interests. The constitution has an established concept: when it expands the concept of freedom of conscience it speaks about the right to disseminate one's convictions. This measure, this rule of law seemed, to put it mildly, simply excessive; it does not facilitate

the harmony of interconfessional relations but, on the contrary, leads to imbalance and to the violation of the constitutional rights of citizens.

Therefore, Vladimir Vladimirovich, I urgently request that you give an order to the Supreme Court simply to summarize practice. So many cases have already accumulated that one can simply draw caricatures. This has simply become ridiculous! I have cited just one case, but there are really a bunch of them. And raise the question of summarizing this practice on the basis of 5.26 with respect to religious organizations, and just raise the question of expediency, of the basis for still having such regulation. There is the concept of "dissemination of religious convictions." Why also introduce the concept of "missionary activity"? Thank you very much.

V. Putin: Thank you. As regards your first case pertaining to this African student, this must be seen, of course, as some kind of nonsense. From what you describe, this is simply some kind of poppy-cock.

And of course it is necessary to do what you propose—to conduct an analysis of law enforcement practice. And if it is necessary, to introduce some kind of correctives.

V. Riakovsky: Regarding this girl, I have now been approached for the purpose of continuing to the European Court...

V. Putin: I do not know what confession she belongs to; she is a Christian, but there are many denominations, too. Jehovah's Witnesses also are Christians, and for this they are persecuted and I also do not quite understand. Therefore it is necessary simply to analyze, it is necessary to do this. I will talk with Viacheslav Mikhailovich [Lebedev], and we will try to do this.

Source: Official website of the president of the RF.

(tr. by PDS, posted 22 February 2019)

Jehovah's Witnesses' attempt to hold onto Kingdom Hall frustrated

Court returns to R.F. ownership land and building that Jehovah's Witnesses donated to Swedish company

Russia Religion News (21.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2EvXDze> - The Biisk city court in Altai territory ruled to be invalid a deal of the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses alienating real estate that was subject to transfer to ownership by Russia, the press center of the regional prosecutor's office reported on Thursday.

"In 2017, after the adoption of a decision concerning the liquidation of the organization 'Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia,' regional structures also were subject to closure and their property to conversion to the property of Russia. However the religious organization of Biisk transferred to a legal entity from Sweden, within the framework of an agreement of donation, a nonresidential building with an area of more than 200 square meters and a parcel of land on Ilia Repin St. in Biisk," the report says.

It is noted that the prosecutor's office considered the deal to be imaginary, inasmuch as the use of the property did not change and the building and land under it were not actually transferred to the possession of the new owners.

"The deal was concluded in order to make it impossible to convert the property to the ownership of the Russian Federation. The prosecutor's office filed a suit in the Biisk city court to find the deal invalid. It was considered and granted," the report emphasized.

By decision of the Biisk city court, the building and land were converted into the property of Russia. (tr. by PDS, posted 21 February 2019)

Moscow Patriarchate's UOC says only 12 out of 36,000 communities joined OCU

Moscow Patriarchate's UOC says only 12 out of 36,000 communities joined OCU

Interfax (21.02.2019) - The Moscow Patriarchate's Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) said that only 36 out of its 12,000 communities in Ukraine have joined the new church of Ukraine (OCU), after the latter was granted autocephaly, and a dispute is unfolding around another 250 communities over changing their confessional identity.

"Today, the statistical data revealed quite clearly that 36 out of 12,000 religious communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church [of the Moscow Patriarchate] have changed their confessional identity. Another 24 communities were forcibly re-registered and these cases will certainly be appealed in the court," head of the Information and Educational Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Archbishop Kliment (Vecherya) said at a press conference in Kiev on Thursday.

"There are about 250 situations, in which there is a standoff with the use of force, and there is a conflict. This conflict has not yet led to any results, therefore, one cannot say that these communities have changed their confessional identity," he added.

After Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew granted autocephaly to the OCU, the Moscow Patriarchate's UOC came under pressure with the use of administrative resource in efforts to make its religious communities convert to another confession, Archbishop Kliment said.

A total of 320 dioceses joined the OCU after granting the Tomos on Autocephaly, Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko said on February 18.

Withdrawal of the Surgut investigation team urged over torture reports

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia (20.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2VdIitU> - On February 20, 2019, an application was submitted to the Investigative Committee of Russia (RFIC) for the withdrawal of the Surgut investigative group, naming head of the investigative department for the city of Surgut Ermolaev, investigators Tkach, Adiyatullin, Gaisin, Bogoderov, Asmolv, and other law enforcement officials. The application stated that reasonable grounds exist that the investigators tortured Jehovah's Witnesses in their custody.

As previously reported, at least seven peaceful Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to torture — electric shocks, suffocation and beatings carried out by those trained to inflict pain with minimal marking or evidence left behind. After being tortured, officers

interrogated the Witnesses, demanding: "Where are the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses held? Who attends the meetings? What are the elders' last names? What is your mobile phone password?"

Previously, one believer turned to the RFIC hotline to report torture, but this only led to his arrest. On February 16, 2019, the hotline received a request to open an investigation against Dmitry Leonidovich Asmolov, investigator of the Surgut Department of the RFIC, because of torture that took place during the intervals between his interrogations.

After the torture of 57-year-old Sergey Loginov was reported to the hotline, he was immediately released, but shortly thereafter he was again detained and then forced to write under torture a statement claiming that no one had tortured him. He remains in detention. No further information has been provided regarding the current situation of Mr. Loginov, nor the other two men arrested after the initial interrogations, 42-year-old Yevgeny Fedin, and 52-year-old Arthur Severinchik.

Torture of Jehovah's Witnesses in Surgut

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia (19.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2VjHJyX> - At least seven of Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to torture—electric shocks, suffocation, and cruel beatings—on the first floor of the Russian Investigative Committee's building at ul. Ostrovskogo, d. 47, in Surgut. While being tortured, officers interrogated the Witnesses, demanding to know: "Where are meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses held? Who attends the meetings? What are the elders' last names? What is your mobile phone password?"

On February 15, 2019, mass searches in Surgut started in the early morning hours. Worshipers were taken to the Investigative Committee offices. Investigators began interrogating the Witnesses, who refused to disclose details about their fellow worshippers. After the only legal representative in the room left, victims report that the following occurred: agents put a bag over the victims' heads, sealed it with tape, tied their hands behind their backs, and beat them. Then, after stripping the Witnesses naked and dousing them with water, the agents shocked them with stun guns. This sadistic torture lasted for about two hours.

At least three Witnesses are still behind bars.

Additionally, after the mass searches were completed, the Russian authorities initiated criminal cases against a total of 19 Witnesses for so-called "organizing an extremist organization."

Those who have been released have had their injuries documented by medical professionals and have filed complaints with supervisory agencies.

The Witnesses will pursue all available legal remedies for this crime, since such an egregious abuse of authority is punishable under the Russian Criminal Code. Additionally, The Russian Federation is subject to several international bodies that protect individuals from torture.

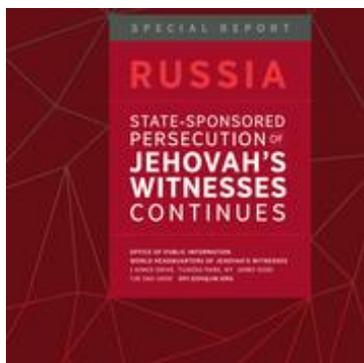
Moscow – Beijing: the anti-cult axis of evil

Willy Fautré

HRWF (14.02.2019) – On 6 February, Dennis Christensen, a Danish Jehovah's Witness living in Russia, was sentenced to 6 years in prison for leading a religious service in Oryol.

The United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the U.S. Department of State, the US Commission of International Religious Freedom have strongly denounced the ban of Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017 and have called for "Mr. Christensen to be released immediately and unconditionally". They have also urged Moscow to allow Jehovah's Witnesses "to peacefully enjoy freedom of assembly without interference, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation as well as by Russia's international commitments and international human rights standards."

The Office of Public Information of the World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses has just published an impressive 28-page report about the magnitude of the repression they victims of: **"Russia: State-sponsored Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses continues"** (<https://bit.ly/2tmTqIW>).



A week ago, official authorities and anti-cult activists in Russia started to launch a counter-offensive to justify the ban of Jehovah's Witnesses. For this purpose, they have mainly used the media agency Interfax-Religion in Moscow which defends the viewpoints of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Kremlin.

A first: They have been joined in their fight by China (!) as Bitter Winter has just discovered.

Moscow's support

Alexander Dvorkin, vice-president of FECRIS: "Jehovah's Witnesses use prison term of the Danish citizen to blacken Russia"

Professor of Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Humanities, Alexander Dvorkin, an anti-cult activist who is well-known for his hate speech towards a number of non-Orthodox religions, supports the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and makes the religious movement responsible for the sentencing of Dennis Christensen.

"As a human, I feel pity for Kristensen. He is another victim of heartless totalitarian sect, which prudently and cynically put him at risk, hoping that he will receive a prison term. Now they will use this case for their propaganda, and as a reason for increasing pressure on ordinary members of the sect: let your indices grow - Dennis Kristensen is suffering for you! Certainly, they use his imprisonment for intensifying the campaign on defamation of our country," Dvorkin told Interfax-Religion in Russia on 7 February.

Dvorkin wished Kristensen enlightenment and liberation "not only from the camp, but also from sectarian manipulations with minds," and supposed that Danish Jehovah's witness violated the law consciously.

For many years, Dvorkin has been the vice-president of the FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sectarianism), which is massively funded by the French authorities. This issue should be seriously questioned by those who in the current French government have been tasked in these difficult times to make the best use of the state budget and save money.

Source: <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14935>

Roman Silantsev: "The ban of Jehovah's Witnesses is justified"

On 12 February, Interfax-Religion in Russia interviewed Roman Silantsev, Professor and director of a special laboratory studying destructive challenges in Moscow State Linguistic University.

Commenting the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses, he considered the ban as justified and noted that "this sect promotes external and inner extremism, inciting hatred to those who think and believe in a different way and bullying their own members."

"Recognizing this sect as extremist gave a possibility to dozens of our citizens to leave this concentration camp", he said.

"As to judicial decisions referring to Jehovah's Witnesses I have information that this sect consciously pushes their members to crimes of such kind, in order to have a certain group of people really convicted for participating in them, to create a halo of martyrs for them and to exert pressure on Russia. So, I would urge the judicial authorities to use all opportunities in order not to give them real terms," Silantsev told Interfax.

According to him, in this situation it is better to fine sectarians, to conscript them to forced labor, but minimize the number of people really imprisoned for such cases. "We should not play along with Jehovah's Witnesses", Silantsev believes.

Source: <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14946>

Russian Justice Ministry: "The rulings of Russian courts are founded and lawful"

The Russian Justice Ministry has described the rulings of Russian courts which branded Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organization and prohibited its activity in Russia as founded and lawful, the ministry press service said in a statement seen by Interfax.

The court ban on the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia is not an act of religious persecution; the sole reason is their violation of Russian laws.

Source: <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14953>

Russian Supreme Court Chairman Vyacheslav Lebedev: "Nobody is being persecuted for religious reasons"

"Nobody is being persecuted for religious reasons. The organization has been banned for activity which is against the law. Revoke the law and there's no problem," Lebedev said.

"The situation is actually being presented as if these people are being persecuted for their belief and religious activity. Yet the decision, which was made by the Supreme Court amongst others, is unrelated to religion. It is about a violation of the law, which religious organizations have no right to breach," Lebedev said.

Source: <http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14949>

China supports Russia's persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses

In an article entitled "China supports Russia's persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses" published on 10 February by Bitter Winter, Massimo Introvigne writes **"While the world condemns the sentencing of Witnesses in Russia to harsh jail penalties for the only crime of practicing their faith, China applauds the persecution"** and goes on saying

"Russia, however, can count on an "immediate and unconditional" ally of its own — China. The CCP is aware that the notion of "extremist religious movements" in China is substantially the same as the category of xie jiao in China.

As Hong Kong scholar Ed Irons has noted, the "Chinese anti-cult Web site" is regarded in China as the voice of the CCP in matters regarding any group identified as a "cult" and its declarations enjoy a semi-official status. While the world was awaiting Christensen's sentencing, this CCP-connected Web site published a detailed article in support of the Russian position on Jehovah's Witnesses. "It is reasonable for Jehovah's Witnesses to be strictly controlled or even completely banned", the article stated. A laundry list of anti-cult accusations against Jehovah's Witnesses was mentioned.

There is a difference between the Russian persecution of "extremist groups" and the Chinese repression of xie jiao. While the CCP tries to protect itself against any possible threat from religious movements it regards as hostile to the Party, Russia tries to protect the monopolistic position of the Russian Orthodox Church, a staunch ally of the regime, against any unwelcome competition.

The Chinese anti-cult Web site seems not to fully appreciate this difference. It supports the Russian position that Jehovah's Witnesses should be banned because "they threaten the Russian mainstream religion: the reputation and living environment of the Orthodox Church" and are "eroding the foundation of the Orthodox Church". That the Orthodox Church should be protected against its critics is a curious remark in a CCP publication, although within the CCP there are some who argue in a similar way that the monopoly on the Christian Protestant faith of the CCP-controlled Three-Self Church should be equally protected.

There is an underground presence of Jehovah's Witnesses in China, with numbers difficult to evaluate. They are not included in the list of the xie jiao, but their activities are regarded as illegal and Bitter Winter has reported about the crackdown on Witnesses' missionary activities coming into China from Korea.

Sources: <https://bitterwinter.org/china-supports-russias-persecution-of-jehovahs-witnesses/>

https://cesnur.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/tjoc_2_1_3_irons.pdf

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet disagrees with Russian authorities and anti-cult activists

On 7 February, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet issued the following comment on the criminalization of the right to freedom of religion for Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia:

"We are deeply concerned about the sentencing in a Russian court on Wednesday of a Jehovah's Witness to six years in prison on charges of 'organising the activity of a banned extremist organisation'.

Dennis Christensen was detained in May 2017, a month after Russia's Supreme Court declared the Jehovah's Witnesses to be an extremist group. Christensen was accused of continuing to ensure the work of the organization in Oryol, in the west of the country, despite knowing it had been banned. Criminal cases have since then been opened against more than 100 members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, including at least 18 who are held in pre-trial detention. Others have been subjected to various measures of restraint, including house arrest and travel restrictions.

The harsh sentence imposed on Christensen creates a dangerous precedent, and effectively criminalises the right to freedom of religion or belief for Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia – in contravention of the State's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Various UN human rights bodies, including the UN Human Rights Committee and a number of UN Special Rapporteurs, have raised similar concerns in recent years.

We urge the Government of Russia to revise the Federal Law on Combating Extremist Activity with a view to clarifying the vague and open-ended definition of 'extremist activity', and ensuring that the definition requires an element of violence or hatred. We also call on the authorities to drop charges against and to release all those detained for exercising their rights to freedom of religion or belief, the freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

HRWF recommends that

- The United Nations deprive **FECRIS** of its ECOSOC status as its vice-president, **Alexander Dvorkin**, supports Russia's ban of Jehovah's Witnesses and the prohibition of any of their individual and collective religious activities,
- The French government stops financing FECRIS.

Dennis Christensen behind bars for 6 years: Outcry of the international community

Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon the European Parliament to adopt a resolution denouncing the egregious violations of religious freedom in Russia and to ask for the release of Dennis Christensen

HRWF (11.02.2019) – HRWF joins the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union in demanding Mr Christensen to be released immediately and unconditionally.

Additionally, HRWF urges the European Parliament to adopt a resolution denouncing the egregious violations of religious freedom in Russia.

Council of Europe: Russia monitors express concern at sentencing of Jehovah's Witness for 'extremism'

CoE (07.02.2019) -The co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for the monitoring of Russia, Telmo Correia (Portugal, EPP/CD) and Angela Smith (United Kingdom, SOC), have expressed serious concern at the conviction and sentencing to six years imprisonment, by the Zheleznodorozhnyi District Court, of Dennis Christensen for "organising the activity of an extremist organisation" on the grounds that he is a practising Jehovah's Witness.

"Mr Christensen's conviction and imprisonment for nothing more than peacefully practising his faith is an unacceptable violation of the right to freedom of religion," said the co-rapporteurs. They emphasised that the European Court of Human Rights has already, on previous occasions, ruled in favour of Jehovah's Witnesses' right to worship without interference from the Russian authorities.

In addition, the co-rapporteurs reiterated concerns expressed by PACE about the abuse and arbitrary application of the so-called "extremism law" by the Russian authorities. They expressed their hope that Mr Christensen's conviction would be overturned without delay by the appeals court and called on the Russian authorities to release him pending an appeal.

Source:

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=7366&lang=2&cat=3>

European Union: Statement by the Spokesperson of Federica Mogherini on the sentencing of Dennis Christensen

EEAS (06.02.2019) - Today, a Russian court in the city of Oryol sentenced Mr Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen, to 6 years of imprisonment.

Mr Christensen was arrested in 2017 when Federal Security Service agents raided a peaceful religious meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses in Oryol. He has been convicted on grounds of 'organising extremist activity', which amounts to exercising his right to freedom of religion as a Jehovah's Witness. A number of other criminal cases against Jehovah's Witnesses are also currently pending. No one should be imprisoned for peaceful acts of worship in the expression of their religious beliefs.

The European Union expects Mr Christensen to be released immediately and unconditionally. Jehovah's Witnesses, as with all other religious groups, must be able to peacefully enjoy freedom of assembly without interference, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as by Russia's international commitments and international human rights standards.

Source:

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/57728/statement-spokesperson-sentencing-dennis-christensen-russia_en

USA: USCIRF condemns Russian conviction of Danish prisoner of conscience Dennis Christensen



USCIRF (07.02.2019) - [Kristina Arriaga](#), Vice Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), today condemned the decision by a Russian court to convict and sentence [Dennis Christensen](#), a Jehovah's Witness, to six years imprisonment on charges of "organizing the activity of an extremist organization."

"Dennis Christensen's conviction represents the continued deterioration of religious freedom in Putin's Russia," said Arriaga, who advocates on behalf of Mr. Christensen as part of USCIRF's [Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project](#). *"Evidently, it's not enough for the state to brand peaceful groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses 'extremist'; it must also imprison their members. Russia must enter the 21st century and respect religious freedom as a fundamental human right."*

In June 2016, following a trend of repression of religious minority communities throughout Russia, a regional court in Oryol, where Mr. Christensen resides, branded the local Jehovah's Witnesses branch an "extremist" group. On May 25, 2017, state security forces disrupted a Jehovah's Witness prayer service, detaining some 70-80 people for several hours and arresting Mr. Christensen, alongside 15 Russian citizens. Mr. Christensen had appeared in court more than 50 times before being convicted on February 6. He has already spent more than 622 days in Detention Facility No. 1 in the Oryol Region.

In 2018, USCIRF again [recommended](#) that Russia be designated a "country of particular concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act. In November 2018, the U.S. State Department [placed Russia on a Special Watch list](#) for "engaging in or tolerating severe violations of religious freedom."

Source:

<https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/press-releases-statements/uscifr-condemns-russian-conviction-danish-prisoner-conscience>

HRWF Database of FORB Prisoners contains documented cases of

- 29 JW who were in prison last year (some were afterwards put under house arrest but most of them are still detained)
- 7 cases of Said Nursi Followers (Muslim) and 4 cases of Tabligh Jamaat Muslims
- 5 Scientologists

In all, more than 40 peaceful believers were in prison in Russia in 2018.

In 2018, Russia was in Tier 1 of HRWF Database of FORB prisoners of conscience per country (<https://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>) *

(*) **Tier 1 (over 40 prisoners):** China, Eritrea, Iran, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, South Korea, Uzbekistan, Vietnam

Tier 2 (10-40 prisoners): Egypt, Indonesia, Singapore, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan

Tier 3 (under 10 prisoners): Algeria, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Yemen

Danish Jehovah's Witness sentenced to six years in prison in Russia

By Anton Troianovski

The Washington Post (06.02.2019) - <https://wapo.st/2Sdlf10> - A Russian court sentenced a Danish Jehovah's Witness to six years in prison for extremism Wednesday, one of the harshest verdicts in years against a Western citizen here and the latest incident in Russia's crackdown on personal freedoms.

The Jehovah's Witness, Dennis Christensen, was detained in May 2017 after a police raid on his congregation in the city of Orel, south of Moscow, and has been in jail ever since. On Wednesday, the district court ruled he was guilty of "organizing the activity of an extremist organization," according to the Russian branch of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Russian Supreme Court ruled Jehovah's Witnesses to be an extremist organization in 2017, ordered its activities banned, and said its property could be seized. Christensen is the first member of the religious group to be sentenced for extremism, said Tanya Lokshina, the Moscow-based associate director for Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia division.

The ruling comes amid an ongoing crackdown on personal and civil liberties in Russia and sends the message that people's prominence or foreign citizenship won't protect them from prosecution.

"Six years in jail for peacefully practicing your own religion is something that comes right out of the history book on Soviet dissent," Lokshina said. "It sends a very strong signal to all those who are ready to stand up that there will be no mercy."

Christensen will appeal the decision, the Russian branch of Jehovah's Witnesses said.

Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen said his country would continue to assist Christensen and called on Russia "to respect freedom of religion." Yaroslav Sivulsky, a representative of the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, said Christensen was punished for "reading the Bible, preaching, and living a moral way of life."

Russian authorities have described Jehovah's Witnesses — the group says it has about 170,000 believers in Russia — as a threat to public order. At the Russian Supreme Court, the government brought in former followers to testify that top church officials took "total control" of their "intimate life, education and work." The Jehovah's Witnesses' lawyers have denied those allegations.

Founded in the United States in the 19th century, Jehovah's Witnesses reject subservience to the state and believe God to be the only true ruler. They do not serve in the military or vote.

Scores of other Jehovah's Witnesses are in detention around the country, watchdog groups say.

In a meeting with human rights activists in December, Russian President Vladimir Putin described extremism charges against Jehovah's Witnesses as "nonsense," leading to speculation that legal pressure on the religion's believers would soon stop. Wednesday's ruling, however, shows this is not the case.

Russia's current crackdown extends beyond religion. It comes as the Kremlin faces growing signs of public discontent amid persistent reports of official corruption and a deeply unpopular government plan to raise the retirement age. Putin's approval ratings have fallen to their lowest level since before his annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea in 2014, which was widely lauded at home. They are still at 64 percent, according to the independent Levada-Center, but well down from earlier levels in the 80s.

Oyub Titiev, head of the human rights organization Memorial's Chechnya office, has spent more than a year behind bars on drug charges that his lawyers insist are fabricated. In December, Russia detained an American, Paul Whelan, on spy accusations — though officials haven't said what he was spying on or on whose behalf.

In January, authorities in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don charged activist Anastasia Shevchenko for "repeated participation in the activities of an undesirable organization" — the first time ever that such criminal charges have been filed in Russia, according to Amnesty International. The "undesirable organization" in question is Open Russia, a human rights group founded by exiled former oil tycoon and Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

The state may now be laying the groundwork for an even more far-reaching crackdown on dissent. A draft law pending in the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, would create the groundwork for the Russian Internet to be isolated from the rest of the world.

"We've seen very dire developments where freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association are concerned," Human Rights Watch's Lokshina said.

Some press coverage:

<https://www.apnews.com/82d67ba9eb6046edaf28465ed8707d0c>

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14927>

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14930>

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14927>

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=14929>

<https://www.lalibre.be/dernieres-depeches/afp/russie-un-temoin-de-jehovah-danois-condamne-a-six-ans-de-prison-pour-extremisme-5c5aced99978e2710e1409ea>

Statement by the Spokesperson of Frederica Mogherini on the sentencing of Dennis Christensen in Russia

EEAS (06.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2SvzL86> - Today, a Russian court in the city of Oryol sentenced Mr Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen, to 6 years of imprisonment.

Mr Christensen was arrested in 2017 when Federal Security Service agents raided a peaceful religious meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses in Oryol. He has been convicted on grounds of 'organising extremist activity', which amounts to exercising his right to freedom of religion as a Jehovah's Witness. A number of other criminal cases against Jehovah's Witnesses are also currently pending. No one should be imprisoned for peaceful acts of worship in the expression of their religious beliefs.

The European Union expects Mr Christensen to be released immediately and unconditionally. Jehovah's Witnesses, as with all other religious groups, must be able to peacefully enjoy freedom of assembly without interference, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as by Russia's international commitments and international human rights standards.

Dennis Christensen found guilty – verdict to be appealed



Dennis Christensen. Photo: Simon Kruse / Berlingske

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia (06.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2Bm4VoG> - On February 6, 2019, Judge Aleksei Rudnev of the Zheleznodorozhnyi District Court of Oryol, announced the verdict in the case of Dennis Christensen. Dennis Christensen was found guilty under Article 282.2 (1) of the criminal code for "organising the activity of an extremist organization." He has been sentenced to 6 years in prison.

The decision has not entered into force. His lawyers believe the verdict is unreasonable and will be appealing the decision. Meanwhile, Dennis Christensen will remain in Detention Facility No. 1 in the Oryol Region, where he has already spent 622 days. He is able to receive letters of support.

"We deeply regret the conviction of Dennis Christensen," said Yaroslav Sivulsky, a representative of the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses. "An innocent man who did not commit any real crime was convicted. It is sad that reading the Bible, preaching, and living a moral way of life is again a criminal offense in Russia."

Additional comment: Paul Gillies, International Spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses

"Everyone acquainted with Dennis Christensen knows that he has committed no crime. He received a six-year prison sentence merely for practicing his Christian faith. This verdict reveals just how fragile religious freedom has become in Russia. Jehovah's Witnesses will continue to appeal for justice while supporting their fellow worshippers."

HRWF Comments

1. In 2018, Dennis Christensen was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by the US Commission on International Freedom (USCIRF)
2. HRWF Database of FORB Prisoners contains documented cases of 29 JW who were in prison last year. Some were afterwards put under house arrest but most of them are still detained. However, Russia is only ranked 41th on Open Doors 2019 World Watch List (<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/russian-federation/>)
 - See as well Aid to the Church in Need 2018 Religious Freedom Report on Russia: <https://religious-freedom-report.org/report/?report=790>
 - HRWF Database of FORB Prisoners also contains 7 cases of Said Nursi Followers (Muslim) and 4 cases of Tabligh Jamaat Muslims.
 - In all, about 40 peaceful believers were in prison in Russia in 2018.
3. Six-year prison term. His pretrial detention will be calculated 1.5x toward the sentence. Dennis Christensen will appeal the decision.

Case of Christensen in Oryol

Region: Oryol Region

Locality: Oryol

Case number: 11707540001500164

Number of the case in court: 1-37/1

Current stage: trial in court of first instance

Suspected of: according to the investigation, together with the others he conducted religious services, which is interpreted as "organising the activity of an extremist organisation" (with reference to the court's decision on the liquidation of the local organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses)

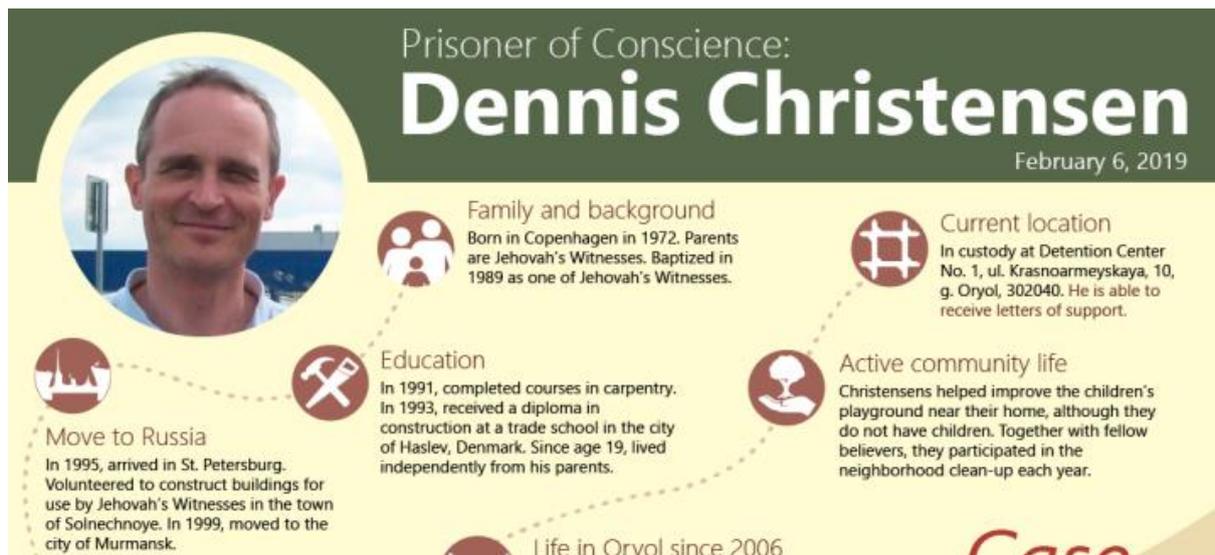
Article of the Russian Criminal Code: 282.2(1)

Case initiated: 23 May 2017

Investigating: Investigative Department of the Directorate of the FSB of Russia for the Oryol Region

Considering on the merits: Zheleznodorozhnyy District Court of the City of Oryol

Judge: Aleksei Nikolaevich Rudnev



[CLICK TO OPEN FULL INFOGRAPHIC](#)

One Jehovah's Witness refugee's story

Witnesses on the run: how believers are persecuted in Russia

Russia Religion News (27.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2VyB615> - Authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany have called attention to a new trend: Jehovah's Witnesses have been fleeing Russia. According to information of the Ministry of Migration and Refugees of the F.R.G., in 2018 the proportion of Russian citizens among refugees arriving in Germany is 2.3%. At the same time, the number of applications for asylum from Jehovah's Witnesses is growing.

The newspaper of the federal ministry for affairs of migrants and refugees, *Entscheiderbrief*, writes concerning this:

"On 20 April 2017, the Russian Supreme Court dissolved the headquarters of the Jehovah's Witnesses and all 395 of its divisions on the territory of the RF, and it also ruled Jehovah's Witnesses to be an extremist organization. Since January 2018, police and the local service of the F.S.B. have taken repressive measures. There have been especially many arrests and searches of apartments in the Orel, Belgorod, and Kemerovo oblasts. Thus, more than 70 arrests of Jehovah's Witnesses were made for alleged participation in the activity of an extremist organization. In the event of conviction, they face imprisonment for a term of from two to four years.

"A representative of the Finnish Department for Refugee Affairs thinks that one should not speak of the systematic persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. In this context, the increase in the number of applications for granting asylum is striking. For example, in Finland 125 applications were registered in 2017 and the same number by September 2018. The number of applications for granting asylum from Jehovah's Witnesses is also growing in Germany. In August 2018 alone, 77 persons sent a request for granting asylum in the F.R.G."

Andrei K., 38, was an elder of a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses of Belgorod. He arrived in Germany with his family, his wife and six-year-old son, in 2013. A year and a half ago Andrei's family received political asylum.

"Just leave"

We arrived in Munich and applied for political asylum. Why Germany? I found the corresponding tickets. At that moment it did not matter where—just leave; there was no time to delay.

Originally we wanted to go to the U.S.A. or Canada. But a visa is necessary for this. In order to get it, a visa story is necessary. I did not have the time to make this story. It was necessary to make the decision in a short time. Therefore Germany.

Before coming here I did not know a single instance when one of our people applied for political asylum. We were some of the first in Bavaria, so far as I know.

In Finland there are many Jehovah's Witness refuges from Russia, although there are many more in Germany. In Bavaria alone there are about 1,000 applications. There also are in other parts of Germany. I know some personally and I know about some who have arrived. In Bavaria alone I can say that since 2013 about a thousand persons have come to Bavaria. This is reliable information. In the city of Bamberg alone—there is a large camp there and for some reason most Jehovah's Witnesses are sent there—about 800 persons passed through. And also they came through Munich and Zirndorf. So somewhere around a thousand, in my estimation, in all.

"I simply appealed to the police"

We moved quickly. By train to Moscow, and we flew from Domodedovo to Germany. Here it is important to understand the legal component of arrival. In order for Germany to have legal bases for considering an application for granting political asylum, it is important not to violate the Dublin agreement and other inter-European acts that are fundamental, so that one country or another will consider your case and have a basis for it.

Of course, it is possible to arrive with a visa and "surrender." But I used another means—transit. I bought a ticket to a visa-free country—in my case, Serbia—and transited through Munich. And I simply appealed to the police in the transit zone.

"It's a pity that they were deported back to Chechnya"

We are now living in a three-room apartment in a city of Bavaria. We attend assimilation courses and the kid goes to school. He is already going to school here in Germany. They took him right away in second grade. He is now in the sixth; he's 12 years old. We used to live in a kind of dormitory for refugees in one of the villages of Bavaria. There are people of various nationalities there, from Africa, Afghanistan. The conditions are acceptable, normal.

We tried to find a common language with people of various cultures. Because as Jehovah's Witnesses we try to talk about the Bible with people of a different nationality. We tried to talk with them in English or some already spoke German, which we also studied. Then a family of Chechens was placed in the dorm. We tried to talk with them about the Bible and about God. Subsequently the wife of this family even began to attend our meetings. She was with us several times and we conversed about spiritual topics. It is a great pity that the family subsequently was deported back to Chechnya.

"If I am returned, serious problems await me"

We waited a long time, because I submitted many documents confirming the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses back in 2009 and 2010, when this campaign began. Actually in Germany they take granting political asylum very seriously and the federal Ministry for Affairs of Migration and Refugees is supposed to verify what you said to them there.

Of course, they have both resources and methods to do this. Therefore my arguments were surely verified.

There are several forms [of political asylum]. We received the maximum, which can only be gotten on the territory of the F.R.G. There is the Asylgesetz (law of granting asylum to persecuted persons—*Idel.Realii*), and it is specifically prescribed that when a person receives political asylum, documents are given to him originally for three years, and they are subsequently extended until gaining citizenship.

Why might they not extend political asylum after three years? A person must commit a criminally punishable act and reject assimilation. And there is a third important factor connected with assimilation: that is language study.

If they were to cease persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and to rehabilitate them, then Germany still would not have the right to cancel your residence permit. In order to return a person, Germany must recognize that Russia (in my case) is a safe country. That is, if it is safe for Jehovah's Witnesses in a political sense, then there would be another conversation and you might be sent back, of course. But if a person has children and a child finished elementary school on German territory, then it is simply impossible to send him back.

Germany considers each case individually. If you come from Russia as a Jehovah's Witness and you say: "Here is the court's decision and it is likely that I will be jailed (this refers to the decision of the Russian Supreme Court of 2017 banning the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and ruling it to be extremist—*Idel.Realii*), then nothing will be said. And therefore some Jehovah's Witnesses receive a refusal, because they do not have a personal story, a personal threat, and incidents confirming it. The Germans understand that if they return me and my family, serious problems await me. Starting with a criminal prosecution and ending in other means of which our agencies in the RF are capable. Beating, intimidation, and many others. I think that you know all of this.

"A widespread campaign began against us"

It will be possible to speak about a return to Russia only if everything changes fundamentally. Therefore for now our return to Russia in the foreseeable future does not seem possible. As it also does not seem possible to return and start to defend by legal means our legal rights and interests. Because we know how the legal system works there. How the law on combating extremist activity is applied; at the present moment it is simply a law for suppressing dissent. Therefore you do not have a possibility of defending yourself.

The case of Dennis Christensen, who is behind bars, for example, shows this. A citizen of Denmark who is living in Russia. On 25 May 2017 he was arrested during group study of the Bible with fellow believers and he was put into the investigative cell of Orel because he professes the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Or the case of the 57-year-old resident of Nevelsk, Sergei Kulakov. Grani and Sova have reported about these cases.

At the present time, about 26 persons are behind bars in Russia. And no legal means will help. It does not even help that some cases have been accepted for review by the

E.C.H.R. on a priority basis. For alleged participation in the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia they now face up to ten years, because, as a rule, cases are opened on the basis of article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the RF, or 282.3 ("financing"), and there are stricter sanctions there.

In Belgorod it all began when the authorities began seeking "legal bases" for combating the activity of the Jehovah's Witnesses. And the Code of Administrative Violations of Law was the first lever in 2008-2009. There are two interesting articles in the code: article 5.1.2, "Violation of the law on missionary activity," and article 6.8, "Imposing religious views." Article 5.1.2 was later deleted. Law enforcement practice simply broke down since the courts at that time still made more objective and independent decisions. According to article 6.8—here's the decision of the court of the city of Shebekino of Belgorod oblast, where I was the defendant (the editorial office has a copy of the court's decision—Idel.Realii). They tried to charge a Jehovah's Witnesses married couple who simply started talking about sacred scripture with a person at a bus stop. This article, if I am not mistaken, is also in the code, but it does not work against Witnesses. But that is not the point. Simply somewhere around 2008-2009 there began against the Jehovah's Witnesses, I would say, a widespread campaign. It consisted in applying all available resources of the law in order to combat the activity of the Jehovah's Witnesses. It all began with these simple articles of the Code of Administrative Violations of Law, and it ended, as we now know, in criminal prosecution.

"They detained him there more than a day, threatening to infect him with AIDS"

They tried to open a criminal case, for example, against Sergei I., a disabled person of the second group. On the basis that he had a book, "What the Bible really teaches," which at the present time is considered extremist in Russia. And he simply offered this book to some person. The Investigative Committee twice refused to open this criminal case.

Then they opened two administrative cases against him. But since at that time the courts in the RF still were more or less independent, these cases fell apart in the courts. There were procedural violations there, and a lot more. So later, in order to get revenge on this Sergei, police officers took him out of his apartment in broad daylight to police department No. 5 in the city of Belgorod. They detained him there more than a day, threatening at the same time to prick him with a syringe which is contaminated with AIDS so that he would sign what they needed. But he refused. Then he managed to phone one of our fellow believers and they managed to spring him from the police. But a statement was submitted to the Investigative Committee and the special security service of the MVD for Belgorod oblast, but there were no results. It was, as always, an order to refuse to open a criminal case because, according to the police blotter, Sergei spent less than three hours in the police department. It is one example of what happened.

"Everything was done to arouse hatred"

Then representatives of the public movements Nashi and Stal began conducting public events near the building where Jehovah's Witnesses conducted peaceful worship services. Rather there were even protest actions aimed at arousing hatred and enmity. Here are photographs I selected from thousands, I guess. The demonstrators wore white tee shirts with slogans "I hate Jehovah's Witnesses," and "Honk if you are against Witnesses."

This of course had consequences. There were attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses. I cannot say whether this was connected or not, but everything was done in order to arouse a full measure of hatred and enmity on the territory of Belgorod oblast.

The Jehovah's Witnesses submitted a statement to the Investigative Committee, the prosecutor's office, and the Commission on Combating Extremism. But law enforcement agencies did not discern extremism in the slogans that the picketers used or in their actions.

One public event, for example, was with drums and it was attended by about fifty persons. They pounded the drums and climbed onto the roof of the house of worship, and walked around, and the worship service was disrupted. Four persons needed medical care later. Elderly people inside the building felt ill and first aid was summoned, which concluded that one had a blood pressure crisis and another had heart problems. And instead of law enforcement agencies responding somehow, they simply opened a case of administrative violation of law against the organizer who supposedly violated the procedure for conducting an event. It was picketing and they staged a parade. That's all the violation of the picketers as it turned out. These are just a few examples that happened beginning with 2009-2010. Pickets or protest actions, as they are more correctly called, began in the summer of 2011.

"This destroys the dignity of the police"

I was warned several times by sympathetic police officers and other agencies, advising me to leave the region, and better, the country. They said that my telephone was tapped and the F.S.B. was collecting material on me.

Once an officer of law enforcement agencies asked me to come to a meeting with his more high ranking colleague for a conversation. I came to this meeting. They took my cell phone so that I could not record the conversation—as they explained to me, my cell phone can listen even when I am not talking on it. They explained to me that F.S.B. personnel were listening to me; they were listening to me on weekends and holidays like they listen to criminal leaders or high ranking officials. Although they did not have permission of a court to do this, but they were listening to my telephone, since the F.S.B. has such a capacity. That was in 2012. And this was the first warning that they were collecting material on me.

Then, really, I began noticing that my telephone was tapped. There were obvious sounds, or for example, a recording was heard of what I or my interlocutor said on a quick scroll. I then realized how the F.S.B. makes such recordings and on what grounds. There is an order of the State Committee of Communication of 1999 regarding the establishing of SORM systems. There is SORM-1, SORM-2, SORM-3. Each mobile operator establishes for itself a certain kind of equipment and F.S.B. officers can, without any court decision, tap your telephone at any time, whenever they want. Therefore I did not have any doubts that the officers of law enforcement agencies were telling the truth.

Many people at that time sympathized with us, understanding what was happening. Many humanely expressed dismay about what was happening to Jehovah's Witnesses. Many even expressed words of support. One experienced officer even said to me that it had become embarrassing to work for the police. Because instead of hunting real criminals they were hounding elderly people who met to read the Bible or to pray in their home. Certainly this destroys the dignity of many police officers and the more so the special subdivisions.

"Aren't you afraid that they'll bash your head with a steel bar?"

Another time I was summoned to the Center for Combating Extremism on the basis of a statement to give explanations. Before that I submitted a statement regarding an incident of conducting a protest action, which aroused hatred and enmity toward Jehovah's Witnesses. And they said to me: so you wrote a statement, and aren't you

afraid that they will bash your head around the corner with a steel bar or do something else? I said: so that's why I went to the law enforcement agencies in order to prevent these negative consequences. They laughed. They said that nobody will defend us and in principle the guys, these Nashites, troopers, they do everything right. This was the first such threat against me from police personnel.

Subsequently they summoned me for a conversation with another high ranking, by local standards, law enforcement officer. This time they described for me what was happening in Taganrog. There was a trial there for finding the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Taganrog to be extremist. And the law enforcement officer said to me that the situation in Taganrog was "an example for us, how we are supposed to act." But humanly, many understood that this is stupidity, insanity, and would lead to no good. But they all had to do what they were told. So they were forced to show their work against the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. They again advised me to leave, because the work was being conducted and the material was being wrapped up.

Another time they summoned me to the police for questioning on the basis of some statement. Again they expressed a negative attitude toward me for the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. And the police officer had on the table among the materials of his case a map of the movements of my Renault Duster car around Belgorod on certain days. There were very many surveillance cameras and it was obvious that this system was used for following my movements.

Taking into account what was happening, I understood that there would be something. It doesn't just happen that materials are collected and telephones are tapped and they summon you to the police so often. Supposedly to ask me about my statement, sure. But a statement is one thing; conversations are held about something else. They asked me not to go to law enforcement agencies and not to file a complaint in court and engage in activity for the defense of Jehovah's Witnesses to the extent I was engaged.

Then they summoned me to more conversations and again advised me to leave. Well a whole lot of things happened—I was followed and serious threats arrived. So I decided to leave the country with my family.

P.S. The full names of the characters are known to the editorial office. The names have been abbreviated at the request of the characters for their protection. (tr. by PDS, posted 31 January 2019)

CRIMEA: Four years' jail for mosque meetings

Crimea's Supreme Court jailed 49-year-old Muslim Renat Suleimanov for four years for meeting with others in mosques to discuss their faith. Three others were given suspended sentences. All were accused of membership of the Tabligh Jamaat missionary movement, banned in Russia. All denied any "extremism".

By Felix Corley

Forum 18 (24.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2TjTowM> - After more than 15 months in pre-trial detention following his October 2017 arrest by the Russian FSB security service, the Supreme Court in Russian-occupied Crimea has jailed 49-year-old local Muslim Renat Suleimanov for four years. He was punished on "extremism"-related charges for alleged

leadership of a group of the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, which Russia has banned. He denied all accusations of "extremism".

Three other Muslims sentenced with Suleimanov in the Crimean capital Simferopol on 22 January were given two and a half year suspended sentences, when they will live under restrictions, the group Crimean Solidarity noted after the verdicts were handed down. All four are from the Crimean Tatar minority (see below).

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. "These lessons were not conspiratorial and took place in mosques" (see below).

The four men admitted that they were adherents of Tabligh Jamaat, telling the court they supported its aims of conducting missionary activity among fellow Muslims. However, they rejected any "extremism" or "terrorism". These are believed to be the first criminal convictions in occupied Crimea related to the Tabligh Jamaat movement (see below).

"The men simply gathered in the local mosque to discuss religious questions," a legal specialist familiar with the case told Forum 18 in November 2018. "This is of course a question of freedom of conscience."

The case had been brought by the Russian FSB security service, based on its secret recordings of the meetings in mosques, testimony from unidentified "witnesses" and books seized from the men's homes (see below).

Judge Sergei Pogrebnyak issued the written verdicts to the men's lawyers on 24 January.

Aleksandr Lesovoi, Suleimanov's lawyer, told Forum 18 on 24 January that it was too early to know if his client will appeal against the conviction. So too did Yegor Zvantsev, lawyer for Abdurakhmanov.

Arsen Kubedinov's lawyer Jemil Temishev announced on his Facebook page on 22 January that he would not be appealing on behalf of his client.

The four Muslims were convicted 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".

As alleged organiser, Suleimanov faced a maximum 10-year jail term, while the other three – deemed to be participants - faced a maximum 6-year jail term each.

The Russian FSB security service is still investigating the criminal case against Jehovah's Witness Sergei Filatov on the same "extremism"-related charges. The case – which the FSB launched on 10 November 2018 – is the first against Jehovah's Witnesses in occupied Crimea. The FSB investigator Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin again refused to talk to Forum 18 (see below).

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 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 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) (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 and 22 under house arrest as of 1 January 2019, Jehovah's Witnesses noted. 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.

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. Forty such administrative prosecutions are known to have been brought in 2018 of which 28 ended with punishment.

Supreme Court verdicts

On 22 January, Judge Sergei Pogrebnyak at Crimea's Supreme Court in the capital Simferopol convicted four local Muslims of 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" under Criminal Code Article 282.2.

The four men were convicted of involvement in the Tabligh Jamaat Muslim missionary movement, which Russia has banned. Judge Pogrebnyak handed down these sentences, Crimean Solidarity noted:

- 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.

Prosecutors had originally handed the criminal case against the four men to court in September 2018, but the court rejected the case because it had been "completed with violations of the provisions of the Code" and sent it back. Prosecutors overturned this on appeal.

Prosecutors resubmitted the case to the Supreme Court on 28 November 2018. The trial itself began on 17 December 2018, according to court records, with six further hearings. Court hearings were open, and relatives of the accused men were able to attend, Suleimanov's lawyer Aleksandr Lesovoi told Forum 18 on 24 January.

"I didn't engage in anti-Russian or anti-constitutional activity"

An officer of the Russian FSB security service – which had launched the criminal case in September 2017 – was questioned in court on 10 January as a prosecution "witness".

Suleimanov told the 10 January hearing that two meetings of Muslims had taken place in April and October 2016 but denied that they had been "conspiratorial". They had discussed Islam and missionary activity. He said he shared Tabligh Jamaat's views on calling people to Islam, but did not know anything about – and did not share – any calls to terrorist or extremist activity.

Suleimanov rejected a linguistic "expert analysis" of what he had said at the meetings (as secretly recorded by the Russian FSB) which he claimed was manipulative and often ignorant. He did not contest the religious studies part of the "expert analysis" which he said had portrayed the religious movement accurately, the Crimean blogger Igor Vorotnikov wrote for RFE's Crimean Realities website on 12 January.

Abdurakhmanov told the 14 January 2019 hearing that he had been a member of Tabligh Jamaat, "but I didn't engage in anti-Russian or anti-constitutional activity", Crimean Solidarity noted. "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]. These lessons were not conspiratorial and took place in mosques."

Abdurakhmanov added that he had learnt of the Russian ban on Tabligh Jamaat in 2016 after others had been arrested. By 2017 he had already left the group and no longer attended lessons. Asked by the Prosecutor if he had said that it was necessary to fight against people of other faiths, Abdurakhmanov told the court: "No."

Kubedinov, who was defended by the lawyer Jemil Temishev, similarly confirmed that he had been a member of the group, Crimean Solidarity noted, but insisted no extremist discussions had taken place.

Judge Pogrebnyak rejected a motion by Suleimanov's lawyer Lesovoi (supported by the Prosecutor) to summon the linguistics "expert" Fomina to examine whether statements contained any calls to fight and, if so, in what form.

During the trial the head of the Crimean Muslim Board, Chief Mufti Emirali Abliev, appealed to the court not to jail the four Muslims, Kubedinov's lawyer Jemil Temishev noted after the verdict was announced.

At the 16 January 2019 hearing, the Prosecutor (Forum 18 was unable to find her name) called for Suleimanov to be jailed for five years in an ordinary regime labour camp, followed by two years of restricted freedom. She called for the other three each to be given four years' deprivation of freedom, with a three year probation period.

Aleksandr Lesovoi, Suleimanov's lawyer, told Forum 18 on 24 January that the Judge has not yet issued the written verdicts. He said it was too early to know if his client will appeal against the conviction.

Kubedinov's lawyer Jemil Temishev announced on his Facebook page on 22 January that he would not be appealing on behalf of his client. Temishev thanked Crimea's Chief Mufti Ablaev for his appeal to the court not to imprison the four Muslims.

October 2017 raids, arrests

The Supreme Court trial concluded nearly 15 months after Russia's FSB security service launched the criminal cases against the four Crimean Tatar Muslims on 29 September 2017. Masked men raided their homes early on 2 October 2017.

Masked FSB officers and OMON riot police raided Suleimanov's home in the village of Molodezhnoe just north of Crimea's capital Simferopol. They arrived at 6 am with a search warrant as he was returning from early prayers at the mosque. Officers seized a computer, as well as five copies of three Muslim books. 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.

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. 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.

The day after the raid, a Simferopol court ordered that Suleimanov, Abdurakhmanov and Kubedinov be held in pre-trial detention. It ordered that Mustafaev be held under house arrest. Abdurakhmanov and Kubedinov were later freed under a pledge not to leave their home towns. This left only Suleimanov in Simferopol's Investigation Prison. All his legal challenges to his long pre-trial detention were rejected.

The criminal case was initially investigated by the FSB. It was then handed to Crimea's Prosecutor's Office, where it was assigned to Deputy Prosecutor Sergei Bulgakov. He refused to discuss the case with Forum 18 on 23 January 2019. "I'm not authorised to talk to you," he told Forum 18 and put the phone down.

FSB investigating Jehovah's Witness, bank accounts blocked

Investigator Lieutenant Aleksandr Chumakin of the FSB security service in Simferopol is continuing to investigate the criminal case against Jehovah's Witness Sergei Viktorovich Filatov (born 6 June 1972), who lives in the town of Dzhankoi. Chumakin launched the investigation on 10 November 2018.

Filatov is the first individual to face "extremism"-related criminal charges linked to the Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea. He headed the Sivash Jehovah's Witness community in 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.

Filatov faces up to 10 years' imprisonment if eventually convicted under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1, of leadership 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".

On 17 January, 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).

On the evening of 15 November 2018, 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.

Officers who raided the home of 78-year-old Aleksandr Ursu pushed him up against a wall, during which he fell to his knees. Officers then handcuffed him. One of those detained for questioning returned in the morning to find his home ransacked. His pregnant wife had to be rushed to hospital, where she suffered a miscarriage. Jehovah's Witnesses say this was caused by psychological stress. "The young couple do not have children and have taken this tragedy very badly," Jehovah's Witnesses added.

On 16 November 2018, Lieutenant Chumakin ordered Filatov to sign a pledge not to leave Dzhankoi without his specific permission.

The man who answered FSB Lieutenant Chumakin's phone on 23 January 2019 repeatedly insisted it was a wrong number and put the phone down.

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 in November 2018. "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."

BBC features case of Danish Jehovah's Witness

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia: how Dennis Christensen became an Orel extremist

By Viktor Nekhezin

Russia Religion News (23.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2FJzbgV> - [...] At seven o'clock in the evening of 25 May 2017, during a Saturday worship service at building 50 on Zheleznodorozhny St. in Orel, a squad of OMON troops led by agents of the F.S.B. burst into the Kingdom Hall (as Jehovah's Witnesses call their houses of worship). A search was conducted in the building, which lasted until 5:00 in the morning of the next day.

Of 100 persons who were at the worship service, only Dennis Christensen was arrested. He was informed that a criminal case of extremism had been opened against him. Since that time, the Dane has been in pretrial detention.

He himself calls the accusation against him absurd. "To call me or other peaceful Jehovah's Witnesses extremists is the greatest stupidity that I have ever heard!" the Dane says in amazement.

An "excerpt from the order regarding the defendant of 15 November 2017" says that "Christensen, Dennis Ole, committed an intentional crime against the foundation of the constitutional structure and the security of the state." In the opinion of the investigator, Christensen, while being "the effective leader of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel, undertook aggressive actions of an organizational nature directed to the continuation of the illegal activity of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel."

The list of charges against Dennis Ole Christensen includes:

- he agreed and coordinated his actions as leader of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel with the forbidden "Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia;"
- he received from the "Administrative Center" religious literature with extremist contents and also forms for registering refusal of medical intervention (blood transfusion);
- he engaged three Russian citizens in the administration of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel (a criminal case against them was made into a separate trial and all three left Russia, along with their families, in 2017);
- he disposed of property of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel, by controlling the receipt and disbursement of funds;
- he organized the collection of funds from members of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel and directed their transfer to the account of the forbidden "Administrative Center;"
- "he continued the use of the building at the address of 50 Zheleznodorozhny St., Orel" as the premises for worship services and directed the payment of utilities for this building;
- "he adopted measures of conspiracy for hiding the activity of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel;
- he organized the storage of financial documents and religious literature "in electronic form and remote access;"
- "using his authority as a spiritual leader," he independently made decisions about receiving new members into the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel;
- "he was the initiator and he exercised primacy in determining the course of worship services," in which persons who are not adherents of the religious teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses and also state agencies and bodies of local administration are evaluated negatively.

At the same time, Dennis Christensen was not even an official member of the Orel local religious organization. "He was never in this local religious organization at all and he could not be by law. Can you imagine? Because he is a foreigner. And the charter of the local religious organization stipulates that only citizens of Russia may be members of the local religious organization. Of course, this is nonsense, but what is to be done," explains Irina [Christensen's wife].

Her words are confirmed by Christensen's lawyer, Anton Bogdanov: the defense examined the documents of the local religious organization and did not find a single mention of Dennis Christensen. "Even the prosecution does not challenge this," Bogdanov emphasizes. "They say that he was the 'effective director.' Although the facts say otherwise."

According to the logic of the prosecution, the attorney says, it turns out that after the liquidation by the court of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel, the adherents of this religion in principle did not have the right to conduct worship services: "Their position comes down to this, that once the court liquidated the legal entity, then people cannot assemble together, read the Bible, pray, or sing religious songs."

But this contradicts the decision of the Supreme Court, the attorney avers. "There is the appellate determination of the Russian Supreme Court on this case regarding the liquidation of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel—that after this liquidation, people professing the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses have the right to profess their religion afterward and to conduct their rituals," Anton Bogdanov recalls.

Complete Surprise

The local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Orel was liquidated in July 2016; in October of the same year this court decision took legal effect, but both before and after this the Orel Jehovahists continued to gather twice a week in their Kingdom Hall on Zheleznodorozhny. Irina Christensen said that she and her husband did not have any premonitions or fears. Dennis' arrest at the end of May 2017 was a complete surprise for them.

The prosecutors presented their evidence in court for almost six months, but, as Anton Bogdanov notes, the foundation of the accusation was audio and video recordings made with the help of a hidden camera of two services in February 2017. The recordings were made by an agent who was inserted into the congregation, who spoke in court as a secret witness under the pseudonym "Aleksei Ermolov."

"This is a person we know. He is a teacher of the Orel State University, and he filmed everything that was happening," the attorney explains. The identity of the secret witness became known to participants in the trial and journalists, but he himself refused to talk with the press.

Attorney Bogdanov doubts that it is possible to find any signs of extremism in the recordings made by "Aleksei Ermolov"

"These are ordinary conversations about religion. That God will destroy dishonest people—this is a quotation from the Bible. That people who will be righteous will live forever. Not Jehovah's Witnesses, but people who will be righteous, they will live forever. That it is necessary to develop in one's self meekness, self-control, patience, and love, and to relate to people peacefully no matter how they treat us. These are quotations of phrases that were spoken in the service," Bogdanov cites examples.

The attorney insists that in the case there is no criminal event.

In court the secret witness repeated two of the most common accusations against Jehovah's Witnesses: that they break up families and pose a threat to their own life by refusing blood transfusion. But the witness replied to clarifying question of the defense that he knew about this "from the internet."

"Cite facts: whose family was broken up, who died without blood, what else? I know of no incidents in Orel. It is very superficial. A lot of dirt, few facts. More subjective evaluation," Bogdanov summed up the statements of the secret witness.

Several court sessions were devoted to wiretaps of Christensen's telephone conversations with his fellow believers. Attorney Bogdanov thinks that the court did not hear anything that incriminates his client. Even the opposite: without knowing about the wiretap, in one of the conversations Christensen himself says to his interlocutor: "We are not a local religious organization; we are simply a religious group, ordinary believing people." In the opinion of Anton Bogdanov, this proves the absence of any connections of Christensen with the forbidden organization.

During searches in the house of worship and in the apartment, a lot of religious literature was seized from Christensen, but the investigators did not manage to find there anything that is extremist. "There is not anything here," Bogdanov summarizes the evidence of the prosecution.

General flow

Dennis Christensen admits that he was an elder, one of several in their congregation (usually in each congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses there are five or six elders). "But this does not make me the leader of the congregation," he insists. "Jesus said in Matthew 23.8, 'You all are brothers.' I am a Christian brother, the same as all the rest, and we are equal before God."

Attorney Anton Bogdanov thinks that the prosecution does not have weighty evidence that it was Dennis Christensen who was the organizer of the worship services and generally the head of the Orel congregation. In the video recordings of meetings it is evident that the leader of the meetings was another person, and Christensen was only one of the speakers.

Bogdanov says that there was no need to organize anything: in a brochure published centrally for Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world and not banned in Russia there is a schedule with clear instructions when to read which excerpts from the Bible, what questions to discuss, and what songs to sing. "This is the general flow of the world religious confession of Jehovah's Witnesses. And the witnesses who were questioned said: we do not need for anyone to come and say: 'So, I am your organizer; today we are reading this, and tomorrow that,' everything is clear here."

On a cost-free basis

In the attorney's opinion, the other points of the indictment are also similarly insubstantial. For example, that it was Christensen who was responsible for the use of the premises where the worship services were held. The building at 50 Zheleznodorozhny, where the Orel Jehovah's Witnesses made their Kingdom Hall, is owned by a private individual who resides in Moscow and provides the building for use by the Jehovah's Witnesses at no cost. Anton Bogdanov supposes that the owner is a Jehovah's Witness himself and his testimony is in the materials of the case. There was no rental agreement.

And Bogdanov emphasizes, there were three congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in all in Orel. "Consequently, this building was attended not only by the group Christensen was in but also was used by other people," the attorney points out.

After Christensen's arrest, his fellow believers ceased using the building at 50 Zheleznodorozhny and now their meetings are conducted in apartments in various districts of Orel.

Second round of repressions

Despite nearly a year and a half spent in prison, Dennis Christensen, as previously, does not regret that he moved to live in Russia. "It is one of the best decisions that I have made in my life, and it brought me much happiness," he thinks.

His wife says that they feel the support and aid not only from fellow believers and relatives. Many rights advocacy organizations recognize Dennis Christensen as a political prisoner.

"In principle, in Russia this was everything that was in the Soviet Union. Jehovah's Witnesses were under a ban for decades, they met secretly, they read the Bible surreptitiously. This all was already, it is history. This has not stopped people," she recalls. Irina says that now a second round of repressions against Jehovah's Witnesses is going on and they are ready for it.

"The prison terms are the very same; at that time they gave ten years, and now it is ten years. One for one. The article simply is different. There you were considered an enemy of the people, and here, an extremist," Irina says.

She is not making plans and she is not contemplating alternatives in the event of Dennis' deportation from Russia. Irina maintains that she and her husband have never thought about leaving the country and they do not want to even now.

There are already dozens of cases of Russian Jehovah's Witnesses in the European Court of Human Rights, including an appeal by Dennis Christensen against his detention and by Irina Christensen for deprivation of her right to meet with her husband during the investigation. Irina does not doubt that they will win these cases, since the E.C.H.R. has already made decisions in favor of the Jehovah's Witnesses in similar instances. In the event of an unfavorable outcome of the trial in Orel, they will of course also appeal it to the E.C.H.R.

It seems that Dennis Christensen has already lost faith in Russian justice. "To be honest, I always had the feeling—both during the investigation and during the trial—that everything had already been decided long, long ago, and I am already convicted," Christensen acknowledges.

And he adds: "We will see whether I am right." (tr. by PDS, posted 23 January 2019)

[Translator's note: this is a translation of the second half of the original BBC article.]

Almost two-year-long trial of Jehovah's Witness nears end

In trial of case of Danish believer in Orel, defendant himself provided explanations

Russia Religion News (18.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2AVCJZv> - On 15 and 16 January 2019, Dennis Christensen, who is charged with "arranging the activity of an extremist organization" (Art. 282.2 of CC RF), presented to the court his explanations. He confirmed that he professes the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses, analyzed the motives ascribed to him by the investigation, pointed out the shortcomings in the indictment, openly exposed the secret witness of the prosecution, and declared his complete innocence.

Concerning his faith and intent

"It is true that I am an elder," he confessed in court. "Among Jehovah's Witnesses this is not an office but a way of life of a minister of God." As evidence, Christensen quoted for the court excerpts from the Bible that speak about the high moral requirements for elders. However he decisively refuted the accusation of "convoking meetings" and that he is an "organizer" of worship services. Christensen described in detail that Christian meetings are an expression of Christian love on the part of each person and that they were conducted in Orel before his arrival and will be conducted if he is not there.

In analyzing the motives ascribed to him as extremist, Dennis Christensen described why he likes the religion of the Witnesses: "We call one another brothers and sisters... After such meetings a person feels encouraged. We discuss how to provide practical help to those who are sick. It is possible they need help in purchasing groceries or preparing meals. The elderly often need help if something breaks or a light bulb needs changing. We discuss how to help people so that they will have close relations with God and how to explain biblical truths to them. We discuss how one can improve relations with neighbors, coworkers, and classmates. Sometimes about what we could do in order that our city becomes yet cleaner." He summarized: "As is evident from the aforesaid, when I became a Jehovah's Witness and subsequently, when I came to Russia, I did not have any intention to commit a crime."

Was it forbidden to believe in Jehovah

Back in the SIZO [investigative cell], Christensen received the possibility to acquaint himself with the judicial decision finding the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel to be extremist. He read an excerpt from the ruling of the Russian Supreme Court of 18 October 2016: "The rights of members of the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel to freedom of religious confession will not be violated, since they are not denied the possibility of exercising and conducting religious rituals not connected with the distribution of religious literature of extremist contents." After this Christensen declared: "If the Supreme Court considers it legal for believers, including former members of the local religious organization, to conduct and profess their religious rituals, why then was I accused that in my case these actions are illegal? If the Supreme Court has given such an explanation, why am I accused that I should have understood it differently?"

Christensen explained that the local religious organization of Orel ceased to exist on 18 October 2016 on the basis of a court decision. But this did not mean that believers in the

city of Orel were required to cease believing in God. "Since article 28 of the constitution has not be changed up to the present time, I consider that I and my fellow believers had the right to conduct worship services, which were not in any way connected with the legal entity that had been liquidated."

Concerning the secret records of telephone conversations

"The F.S.B. secretly surveilled me in the course of nine months," Christensen said. "And I did not suspect this. And in all of that period I never denigrated anybody, I did not encourage genocide, nor the persecution of other people, nor the destruction of the family, nor violence, nor anything else that I am accused of. The fact that in my telephone conversations various questions were discussed which were connected with my life as a believing person is not evidence that I committed some kind of crime." "In none of my telephone conversations did there even occur the expression 'local religious organization,'" Christensen continued. "Meanwhile the prosecution arbitrarily declares that I talked about the local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses of Orel. And I never had anything to do with it either legally or actually. Consequently I never had either the intention nor the desire to revive the activity of this organization."

Exposure of a secret witness

Separately Dennis Christensen focused on the testimony of a secret witness with the pseudonym of "Ermilov." "The court was not able to be convinced of the fact that the real name of this citizen is Oleg Kurdiunov. He is a teacher of the Orel State University," Dennis Christensen said. "Under the pretext of a person who was interested in the Bible, Kurdiunov began, in accordance with instructions of the F.S.B., to take pictures with a hidden camera, and then also on instructions from the F.S.B. to secretly record on a dictaphone our conversations with him. Since the audio and video tapes he obtained did not contain any information about crimes committed by me, Kurdiunov decided to supplement them with his own fantasies, giving testimony under a pseudonym. I regard this act as unworthy of a university instructor... As the witness Kurdiunov explained, much of the information he gave to the court, he read on the internet network. That means, his testimony cannot be used as evidence in the case, inasmuch as it is only hearsay."

"Esteemed court, I wish to emphasize that in contrast with the side of the prosecution, I never viewed the peaceful worship services of believers to be a continuation of the activity of the liquidated local religious organization," Dennis Christensen said in conclusion. "I never had the intention of committing a crime." (tr. by PDS, posted 18 January 2019)

Jehovah's Witnesses in prison as of 1 January

HRWF (01.01.2019) - As of 1 January 2019, authorities had placed 25 Witnesses in pretrial detention and 24 under house arrest, and 38 are not allowed to leave the area where they live. All have been charged with organizing, participating in, or financing the activity of an "extremist" organization. In July, officials in Omsk placed the first female Witness in pretrial detention, setting a disturbing precedent.

Officials attempt to justify their actions by citing the April 2017 ban on the Witnesses' legal entities and misapplying Article 282 of the Criminal Code. In reality, they are

prosecuting Jehovah's Witnesses for peaceful worship. If convicted, some of those who have been arrested face prison terms of up to ten years.

Since February 2018, law enforcement officers have followed a general pattern when arresting and detaining Jehovah's Witnesses. Heavily armed police forcibly enter Witnesses' homes, often pointing guns at the heads of the residents—including children and the elderly—and forcing them to the floor. While officers search the premises, they confiscate personal belongings and take some Witnesses into custody for further interrogation. Investigators initiate criminal charges against selected Witnesses for alleged extremist activity and petition the courts to order their pretrial detention. Once the Witnesses are jailed, prosecutors petition the courts to extend the pretrial detentions, and the courts typically grant their requests.

Keeping the faith: With missionary work banned, Mormons in Russia 'Just making friends'

By [Matthew Luxmoore](#)



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RFE/RL (30.12.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2Hjz1hJ> - TVER, Russia -- When American Ian Crookston was assigned to Russia as a Mormon missionary in 2009, the 19-year-old knew next to nothing about the country. Nevertheless, putting his undergraduate studies on hold, he set off for a year of asceticism in its gritty industrial heartland.

That meant forfeiting activities he'd taken for granted. He went offline, cut communication with friends and family, and relinquished his first name in favor of Elder, a title all male Mormon missionaries take.

From morning till late evening, between breaks for meals, scripture sessions, and Russian classes, he walked the streets of the Volga River town of Novokuybyshevsk with a fellow missionary constantly by his side. Sporting suits and smiles, the two scouted for men and boys who might be amenable to Mormonism, the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"We had a territory that we sort of wandered around, and I really do mean wandered. Just trying to harangue people on the street," he says. "It felt like everybody in the town knew who we were."

Some of the practices his cohort engaged in -- sneaking into housing blocks to proselytize door-to-door, trailing people on the street till they agreed to talk -- provoked violence from local thugs and forced church superiors to rein the pair in.

Nevertheless, by the end of his mission, Crookston had converted 27 Russians to his faith, and estimates that he'd spoken to 20,000 people. Though most of them, he says in hindsight, "wanted nothing to do with me."

'Convenient Victims'

Mormons in Russia today can only marvel at such stories.

As part of a crackdown on foreign-based religious groups, the government has imposed significant obstacles to missionary work. A **package of laws** passed in July 2016, and billed as an effort to combat homegrown terrorism, has confined missionary work to places of worship, clearing Russia's streets and homes of proselytizing Mormons.



A young Mormon missionary from the United States speaks with an elderly Russian man in 1997.

A church that owes its presence in Russia to the efforts of missionaries is now effectively banned from publicly preaching the faith.

But it's not only Mormons, whose church Russia officially recognized in 1991, who have been affected by the so-called Yarovaya law, named after Irina Yarovaya, the State Duma deputy who authored it.

Some faiths have been banned outright. In April 2017, the Christian denomination Jehovah's Witnesses was branded extremist and equated in practice with supporters of the Islamic State extremist group. The Supreme Court announced the confiscation of all property in Russia belonging to the U.S.-based organization, and its estimated 170,000 members now risk jail time for congregating. According to Roman Lunkin, a religious expert at the Russian Academy of Sciences, around 100 Jehovah's Witnesses are currently under investigation on extremism charges. Many have emigrated.

In addition, over 500 charges have been brought against religious groups in connection with the Yarovaya law, Lunkin says. The majority are fines for proselytizing in public, incorrectly marked literature, and the absence of plaques designating places of worship - most affected are the Hare Krishna movement and various Protestant denominations, which together total some 3 million members in Russia.

Some of the cases have provoked more amusement than opprobrium. In October 2017, a Russian Hindu was detained as he gave a lecture on yoga in St. Petersburg and was charged with illegal missionary work. The case was subsequently dropped, but it highlighted the precariousness of the situation. The law defines missionary work only as spreading information about one's faith to make nonmembers join, a vague formulation that critics like Lunkin believe can be misused.



Elder Schaub from Köln, Germany (left), and Elder Seegmiller from the U.S. state of Utah at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints meeting house in Tver earlier this month. "Before, you could go up to someone and you could start a conversation about the gospel. And now, we just try and make friends," says Seegmiller.

Lunkin describes the religious groups targeted as "convenient victims" in a state-sponsored campaign against perceived malign foreign influence. "This is the government's reaction to the rebirth of certain stereotypes that are now being used for ideological reasons -- first and foremost, a phobia of sects and anti-Western hysteria," he says. "Ten years ago, no one paid attention to such things."

Just Making Friends

For the Mormon church, this poses a major obstacle. How do you attract new members to a faith when publicly talking about it is banned?

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, the church seized an opportunity to establish itself in a region where atheism had been state policy for decades. Through the efforts of visiting missionaries, the Mormon presence in Russia grew rapidly: from 300 registered members in 1991 to over 14,000 a decade later. Today the Mormon church claims 23,000 adherents in Russia, but growth has since all but stalled.

After the Yarovaya law was introduced, the church leadership in Salt Lake City, Utah, issued a **statement** pledging to "honor, sustain, and obey" it, and announced that Mormon missionaries in Russia would alter their work in accordance with its requirements.

"For a long time the mission was closely associated with proselytizing, preaching the gospel," says Sergei Antamanov, a spokesman for the church in Russia. "But immediately after these changes took place, we realized it wouldn't be possible to operate in the same way here in Russia as the church operates in most of the world. So we had to adapt, and we had to adapt fast."

That meant downsizing the missionary force in Russia by some 100 people, Antamanov says. Missionaries were to be referred to only as "volunteers," and today focus on supporting existing members rather than expanding the flock. Gone are the black name tags linking them to the Mormon church, which together with white shirts, ties, and backpacks comprise a missionary's traditional garb.

In Tver, a provincial town 160 kilometers northwest of Moscow, Elders Schaub and Seegmiller spend their days visiting the homes of church members and roaming the streets engaging locals in small talk.



Yulia Baryayeva speaks to fellow church members at the meeting house of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Tver. "Those who know us and those who travel abroad regularly are curious about the church," says Baryayeva.

"Before, you could go up to someone and you could start a conversation about the gospel. And now, we just try and make friends," says Seegmiller, an 18-year-old who hails from Utah, the church's spiritual home. "Approaching people in a way that is natural and just developing natural relationships is hard. And it is an odd thing to do."

They're also not allowed to publicly discuss the church.

"We can answer pretty much any question, but we can't tell them ourselves," says Schaub, 20. "But most people don't ask questions." He admits there's still confusion about what is and isn't allowed.

The Tver meetinghouse is a large apartment on the ground floor of a nondescript housing block tucked away on a side street near the railway station. A metal plaque outside the front door is the only indication that the venue belongs to the Mormon church.

Inside is a bright, sparsely furnished chapel with a keyboard and a wooden pulpit. Beside the altar is a TV screen on which members watch speeches delivered by American church leaders to vast congregations at the magnificent Mormon temple in Salt Lake City. These are translated into Russian and dozens of other languages. Many are also printed in the church's Russian-language monthly, *Liakhona*, which is replete with glossy images of wealthy, beaming Mormon families.

On a recent Sunday, the stocky blond-haired Seegmiller stands up before the small congregation. Two months into his mission, he delivers a speech in halting Russian about the strength of his faith.

Of 10 current missionaries interviewed by RFE/RL, all speak the language. Aside from constant interaction with locals and minimal contact with home -- they're limited to weekly e-mails and phone calls only on Christmas and Mother's Day -- they chalk it up to a God-given "gift of tongues." But these days, Russian practice happens less on the streets than in meetinghouses and members' homes.

A Dangerous Sect?

With fewer than 10 members, Tver is among the smallest meetinghouses of all in the Moscow mission, one of the Mormon church's six areas of coverage in Russia. Yulia Baryayeva, a giggly kindergarten teacher in her 30s who attended the service with her two young daughters, tells RFE/RL the congregation used to be double the size. "The pensioners have died, and the young people have left," she says.

There's also a wariness among some members to advertise their ties to Mormonism. A Tver parishioner who coordinated an RFE/RL reporter's visit asked to meet three blocks away because he was worried about attracting attention to the meetinghouse. Another asked subsequently for his name to be retracted from this article, since he and his wife were afraid that knowledge of their membership in the church could cause them problems at work.



The nondescript entrance to the meeting house of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Tver. There is a wariness among some members to advertise their ties to Mormonism.

"Those who know us and those who travel abroad regularly are curious about the church," Baryayeva says. "But those who don't are suspicious, and watch all kinds of bad videos online."

Russian state media have long portrayed Mormonism as a dangerous cult, with the church's wealth and American origins held up as proof that it's used for espionage and sedition. And the Russian-language Internet is full of websites like **Antimormon** that list organizations claiming to "cure" former members of religious sects.

Many of them are tied to the resurgent Russian Orthodox Church, which is pressuring the authorities to stall the expansion of faiths considered alien to Russian identity.

To Georgy Belodurov, an Orthodox priest at Tver's Resurrection Cathedral, Russian Mormons are lured by the prospect of a better life in the West. "For some people America is a safe haven where paradise reigns and you live in a land of milk and honey," he says. "And the Mormon church is first and foremost the temptation of a better life."

In 2012, Belodurov published an article in the local press titled **Beware, Mormons!** But today he believes Russia is returning to its roots, and sees little chance that Mormons will gain traction in Tver.

"Ours is the historic, traditional church of Russia, its native faith," he says of Orthodoxy. "It matches the genetic make-up of our nation."

Keeping The Flock

In April, the Mormon leadership in Salt Lake City announced plans to build its first temple in Russia. There are now meetinghouses in over 50 Russian cities, but parishioners looking to tie the knot in Mormon tradition must travel to temples in Ukraine, Finland, or beyond. Where and when the Russian temple might arise remains unclear. Lunkin believes it's a pipe dream in the current political climate.

Matt Martinich, a U.S.-based Mormon researcher, sees the April announcement as an effort to stanch the flow of Mormons leaving Russia. The slowdown in growth has been compounded recently by high levels of emigration, he says, adding that the church's biggest challenge in Russia is keeping its members there.

That's because the Mormon church in Russia, traditionally reliant on a foreign missionary force, now depends on its existing members to expand the faith.

Antamanov, the church spokesman in Russia, is optimistic. The current obstacles, he believes, will encourage parishioners to take initiative and no longer rely on foreign missionaries to spread the word.

"It's a duty every Christian feels -- to share his beliefs with those around him," he says. "And this is an opportunity for us, for our members, to realize that's what they can do."



[Matthew Luxmoore](#)

Matthew Luxmoore is a Moscow-based correspondent for RFE/RL.