



THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

23 August 2019

From the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses

Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee

Prior to the Adoption of the List of Issues

127th Session (14 October-8 November 2019)

Ukraine

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SUMMARY OF THE SUBMISSION

This submission to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) on Ukraine highlights violations of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the Covenant) prior to the adoption of the List of Issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the 8th report of Ukraine.

Jehovah's Witnesses in Ukraine, and as a worldwide organisation, respectfully request the government of Ukraine to:

- (1) Ensure that hate crimes committed against religious communities, including Jehovah's Witnesses, are investigated and prosecuted as such, with offenders receiving appropriate punishment
- (2) Ensure that persons with a sincere conscientious objection to military service, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, are not impeded in exercising their constitutionally protected right to a genuinely civilian alternative service
- (3) Ensure that genuine refugees from religious persecution in their country of origin are granted appropriate asylum and not subjected to refoulement once their *bona fides* are independently determined
- (4) Abide by its commitment to uphold the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Covenant for all citizens, including Jehovah's Witnesses

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (EAJW) is a charity registered in the United Kingdom. It provides support to Jehovah's Witnesses facing fundamental human rights violations in various parts of the world.
2. Jehovah's Witnesses have been present in Ukraine for more than 100 years. In 1926 they held a convention in Velyki Luchky, and in 1928 a convention was held in Lviv, where the national headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses is now located. In 1930 an office was opened in Ukraine, but subsequently Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in Ukraine as in other parts of the Soviet Union. Jehovah's Witnesses obtained formal registration in February 1991 and were re-registered most recently on 27 September 2006. There are currently 138,000 adherents of the faith in Ukraine, and some 217,000 attend religious services.
3. Jehovah's Witnesses are grateful that they enjoy legal registration and freedom of worship in Ukraine. They appreciate recognition of the fundamental rights recognised by the Covenant and of their right to build and operate places of worship.
4. However, the Witnesses continue to suffer harassment and physical harm motivated by religious hatred. In certain regions their ability to obtain the constitutionally protected right to a genuinely civilian alternative service has been impeded by the authorities. Certain refugees from religious persecution in their country of origin have not been granted appropriate

asylum and have been subjected to refoulement despite their *bona fides* being independently confirmed by an independent tribunal.

5. The concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Ukraine (CCPR/C/UKR/CO/7), adopted by the Committee at its 108th session (8–26 July 2013), welcomed the adoption of the Law on Refugees and Persons in Need of Complementary or Temporary Protection in Ukraine, in July 2011 (para 4(a)).

6. Among the principal subjects of concern and recommendation were that:

“The State party should also step up its efforts to ensure that alleged hate crimes are thoroughly investigated, that perpetrators are prosecuted under Article 161 of the Criminal Code and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions, and that victims are adequately compensated” (para 11).

“The State party should ensure that all persons applying for international protection are given access to a fair and full refugee determination procedure, are effectively protected against refoulement” (para 18).

“The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (CCPR/C/UKR/CO/6, para. 12) and stresses that alternative service arrangements should be accessible to all conscientious objectors without discrimination as to the nature of the beliefs (religious or non-religious beliefs grounded in conscience) justifying the objection, and should be neither punitive nor discriminatory in nature or duration by comparison with military service” (para. 19).

7. The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses expresses concern that these formal concerns and recommendations have not been addressed so as to adequately meet Ukraine's commitments under Articles 2, 6, 7, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21, 26 and 27 of the Covenant. Ukraine is also a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which contains similar commitments in its Articles 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14 and Article 1 of Protocol No. 12.

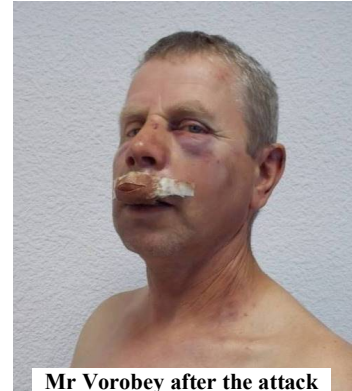
II. VIOLATIONS OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT

A. Hate Crimes / Prosecution of Human Rights Violations (Articles 2, 7, 17, 18, 20, 21, 26 and 27)

8. Jehovah's Witnesses are frequently subjected to hate crimes based on their religious beliefs and adherence. When such crimes are reported, police may arrive late, do little if any investigation and minimize the crime. Even when a perpetrator is held liable, prosecutors and courts generally do not recognise the attack as a hate crime—lessening the punishment for the act of religious intolerance. The following examples are provided by way of illustration.

9. Baranivka, Zhytomyr Region. On 21 June 2017, Oleh Nikitchyn assaulted one of Jehovah's Witnesses, 66-year-old Yuriy Vorobey, because of his religion. He hit Mr Vorobey three times in the head with a wooden club, strangled him for several minutes and insulted him. Onlookers stopped the assailant from continuing the attack.

The medical staff who treated Mr Vorobey noted multiple injuries to his head and body, swollen lips, missing teeth and strangulation marks on his neck. However, investigators only charged Mr Nikitchyn with "minor bodily injury," as outlined in Article 125 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (CCU) and did not acknowledge the attack as a hate crime.



Mr Vorobey after the attack

On 16 May 2018, the Baranivka District Court made its decision based only on the assailant's statement. The court disregarded the perpetrator's motives for the assault and sentenced Mr Nikitchyn to only 160 hours of community service. The court refused to order that Mr Nikitchyn cover the victim's medical expenses. Mr Vorobey's appeal was dismissed on 25 July 2018.

10. Korchivci village, Hlyboka District, Chernivtsi Region. On 27 May 2018, V.O. Kostynian, a forest protection officer, threw stones at two Witnesses, O. Todoresku and R. Shorodok. He damaged their car, insulted them and then assaulted and injured Mr Todoresku. The assailant continued attacking the Witnesses even after the police arrived.

Mr Kostynian had previously insulted, violently attacked and threatened Witnesses on at least 15 occasions. The police ignored the Witnesses' concerns when they reported the incidents and mildly reprimanded the assailant. After some Witnesses filed complaints in court, the police initiated criminal proceedings against Mr Kostynian for a hate crime under Article 161(2) of the CCU on 13 June 2018. The investigation is still in progress, and the assailant has not yet been held liable.

11. Radomyshl, Zhytomyr Region. On 25 March 2018, unidentified person(s) set the local place of worship of Jehovah's Witnesses (Kingdom Hall) on fire. The building was destroyed, with damages of approximately USD 75,500. The investigation under Article 194 CCU (wilful destruction of property by fire) is ongoing but with no progress to date.



Place of worship in Radomyshl attacked by arsonists



12. Allowing the perpetrators of such hate crimes to escape unpunished or to be subject only to minor penalties on lesser charges violates the Covenant-protected rights of Jehovah's Witnesses to freedom of religion (Article 18).
13. Such impunity for perpetrators of hate crimes also subjects Jehovah's Witnesses to unlawful interference of their privacy (Article 17) and to advocacy of religious hatred inciting actual violence (Article 20). It constrains their right to freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 21) and deprives them of the protection of the law (Article 26) and of their right as a minority to profess and practise their own religion (Article 27).

B. Conscientious Objection to Military Service (Articles 9 and 18)

14. The CCPR has recognised that Article 18 of the Covenant protects the right to conscientious objection to military service and the provision of a genuine civilian alternative service in cases such as *Jeong et al v. the Republic of Korea* (CCPR/C/101/D/1642–1741/2007, 24 March 2011) and *Atasoy and Sarkut v. Turkey* (CCPR/C/104/D/1853–1854/2008, 29 March 2012). In the latter, the CCPR stated:

“Although the Covenant does not explicitly refer to a right of conscientious objection, the Committee reaffirms its view that such a right derives from article 18, inasmuch as the obligation to be involved in the use of lethal force may seriously conflict with the freedom of conscience. The Committee reiterates that the right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It entitles any individual to an exemption from compulsory military service if the latter cannot be reconciled with the individual's religion or beliefs. The right must not be impaired by coercion. A State party may, if it wishes, compel the objector to undertake a civilian alternative to military service, outside of the military sphere and not under military command. The alternative service must not be of a punitive nature, but must rather be a real service to the community and compatible with respect for human rights.”—para 10.4. [Footnotes omitted.]

“[Jehovah's Witnesses'] refusal to be drafted for compulsory military service derives from their religious beliefs,” and their “subsequent prosecution and sentences amount to an infringement of their freedom of conscience, in breach of article 18, paragraph 1, of the Covenant.”—para 10.5.

15. In General Comment No. 22 (1993), which considers the fundamental character of the freedoms enshrined in Article 18 of the Covenant, the CCPR states at paragraph 1 that this provision cannot be derogated from, even in time of public emergency, as stated in article 4, paragraph 2, of the Covenant.
16. The European Court of Human Rights affirmed that Article 9 of the ECHR protects the right to conscientious objection in cases such as *Bayatyan v. Armenia* (application no. 23459/03, Grand Chamber, 7 July 2011), *Buldu and others v. Turkey* (application no. 14017/08, 3 June 2014) and *Adyan and others v. Armenia* (application no. 75604/11, 12 October 2017).
17. Jehovah's Witnesses note that Ukraine recognises these provisions and that religiously motivated conscientious objectors are able to perform civilian service that meets the provisions of the Covenant.

18. However, pursuant to Article 9 of the Law of Ukraine “On Alternative (Non-Military) Service”, an application for alternative civilian service must be filed not later than two months prior to the beginning of a conscription period for regular military service, with the start date of a conscription period determined by Presidential Decree. Article 11(3) of the law sets out an exhaustive list of grounds for refusing that a citizen be assigned to alternative service, namely: (1) untimely filing of the application, (2) the absence of evidence proving the genuineness of the religious beliefs and (3) failure of a citizen to appear, without legitimate reasons, for his application consideration.
19. In recent years, the period between the date of the Presidential Decree and the date of the actual start of the conscription has been less than two months. Taking into account the two-month rule, the Dnipropetrovsk Regional State Administration (DRSA) has made a practice of dismissing all applications for alternative civilian service by Jehovah's Witnesses. The DRSA has stated that it cannot satisfy the applications if they are filed *before* a Presidential Decree becomes effective and, at the same time, that it cannot satisfy those applications that are filed *after* the Presidential Decree if the two-month rule is not respected. The DRSA has justified its position as a “collision in the law”.
20. Accordingly, the DRSA has not assigned Jehovah's Witnesses to perform alternative civilian service. Draft boards in the Dnipropetrovsk Region have considered Jehovah's Witnesses applying for such service as draft dodging and liable to perform military service, with potential for criminal charges, detentions or even forcible delivery of Jehovah's Witnesses to military units.
21. Jehovah's Witnesses respectfully request that such a “collision in the law” be eliminated in order to allow them to enjoy their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as protected by Article 18 of the Covenant, without fear of its being impeded or set aside on contrived, technical, capricious or accidental grounds.
22. Jehovah's Witnesses warmly welcome recent undertakings by the DRSA to cease dismissing applications for civilian alternative service on the ground of the “collision in the law” outlined above and note that the DRSA has acted on the basis of this undertaking during the spring 2019 drafting period. However, Jehovah's Witnesses remain concerned that the procedure might be reactivated in either the Dnipropetrovsk Region or elsewhere in Ukraine.

C. Protection of Refugees / Asylum Seekers Fleeing Religious Persecution (Article 2, 6, 7, 13, 17, 18, 26 and 27)

23. Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia have been incorrectly dubbed “extremists” under Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code and consequently are subject to indiscriminate house searches, confiscation of property, detention, imprisonment and torture. This situation has been condemned by the international community.¹

¹ See Annexes 1–8: Statement by EEAS Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Maja Kocijancic, 6 February 2019; Statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, 7 February 2019; Statement from United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 7 February 2019; Statement by the Co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 7 February 2019; EU Statement on the situation of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia to OSCE Permanent Council N° 1217, Vienna, 14 February 2019; Tweets by Heidi Hautala MEP, Vice-president of the European Parliament, 21 February 2019, and by Anders Samuelsen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 6 February 2019; Joint Open Letter and Annex from the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of

24. Consequently, a number of Jehovah's Witnesses have fled to Ukraine in fear of suffering a violation of their Covenant-protected rights to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 7), private and family life (Article 17) and freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18).
25. In addition, a number of former adherents of the Muslim faith who have become Jehovah's Witnesses and who consequently face persecution or even death in their countries of origin purely as a result of their religious beliefs and practices have sought asylum in Ukraine.
26. Jehovah's Witnesses are deeply grateful when the Ukrainian authorities have granted such ones asylum after determination of their *bona fides*, either administratively or before an independent tribunal or court as provided for by Article 26 of the Covenant.
27. However, several such asylum seekers have been subjected to detention and deportation even when the genuineness of their claim has been verified by a court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction.
28. The Committee emphasised in its General Comment No. 20 (1992) that the aim of the provisions of Article 7 of the Covenant is to protect both the dignity and the physical and mental integrity of the individual. The prohibition in Article 7 is complemented by the positive requirements of Article 10, paragraph 1, of the Covenant, which stipulates that "all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person."²
29. In the view of the Committee, States Parties must not expose individuals to the danger of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment upon return to another country by way of their extradition, expulsion or refoulement.³
30. Jehovah's Witnesses are deeply concerned at such instances of refoulement, which have the effect of depriving the individuals concerned of rights protected by the Covenant, including potentially the right to an effective remedy (Article 2(3)(a)); the right to life (Article 6); the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 7); the right not to be expelled from the territory of the State Party other than in pursuance of a decision reached in accordance with law (Article 13); the right to freedom from interference with privacy, family and home (Article 17); as well as the right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion without discrimination (Articles 18, 26 and 27).

peaceful assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 20 December 2018; Special Report from Office of Public Information, World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses *Russia—State-sponsored Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses Continues*, February 2019.

² General Comment No. 20, para. 2, Prohibition of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Article 7 (Replaces General Comment No. 7)

³ General Comment No. 20, para. 9, Prohibition of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Article 7 (Replaces General Comment No. 7)

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

31. Jehovah's Witnesses in Ukraine and as a worldwide organisation, express concern for Ukraine's failure to meet its obligations under the Covenant by robustly investigating and prosecuting hate crimes, by ensuring that civilian alternative service is effectively available to all conscientious objectors and by offering appropriate asylum without fear of refoulement to persons fleeing religious persecution. They respectfully request the government of Ukraine to take the necessary steps to:
 - (1) Ensure that hate crimes committed against religious communities, including Jehovah's Witnesses, are investigated and prosecuted as such, with offenders receiving appropriate punishment
 - (2) Ensure that persons with a sincere conscientious objection to military service, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, are not impeded in exercising their constitutionally protected right to a genuinely civilian alternative service
 - (3) Ensure that genuine refugees from religious persecution in their country of origin are granted appropriate asylum and not subjected to refoulement once their *bona fides* are independently determined
 - (4) Abide by its commitment to uphold the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Covenant for all citizens, including Jehovah's Witnesses.
32. The EAJW will consider submitting an additional complimentary submission with the CCPR *after* the List of Issues is adopted and published.



Bruxelles, 06/02/2019 - 17:05, UNIQUE ID: 190206_7

STATEMENTS BY THE SPOKESPERSON

Statement by the Spokesperson on the sentencing of Dennis Christensen in Russia

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.

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UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Comment by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on criminalising the right to freedom of religion for Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia

Geneva, 7 February 2019

"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."

ENDS

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2018 was the **70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration – translated into a world record 500 languages – is rooted in the principle that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." It remains relevant to everyone, every day. In honour of the 70th anniversary of this extraordinarily influential document, and to prevent its vital principles from being eroded, we are urging people everywhere to **Stand Up for Human Rights**: www.standup4humanrights.org.

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<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24145&L>



Russia monitors express concern at sentencing of Jehovah's Witness for 'extremism'

- 07/02/2019
- MONITORING



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 Zheleznodorozhniy 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 of 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.



United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

USCIRF Condemns Russian Conviction of Danish Prisoner of Conscience Dennis Christensen



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2019

USCIRF Condemns Russian Conviction of Danish Prisoner of Conscience Dennis Christensen

Proof of Putin Escalating Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses, says Vice Chair Kristina Arriaga

WASHINGTON, DC – [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, where he will remain to serve his sentence of six years' imprisonment.

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."

###

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 and belief. To interview a Commissioner, please contact USCIRF at Media@USCIRF.gov or Kellie Boyle at kboyle@uscirf.gov or +1-703-898-6554.

<https://www.uscirtf.gov/news-room/press-releases-statements/uscirtf-condemns-russian-conviction-danish-prisoner-conscience>



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1217
Vienna, 14 February 2019**

**EU Statement on the situation of the Jehovah's Witnesses
in Russia**

The European Union has been following the developments of the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia closely and has raised the issue multiple times here at the Permanent Council.

We are deeply concerned about the recent sentencing in Russia of a Danish Jehovah's Witness Dennis Christensen to six years in prison on charges of "organising the activity of a banned extremist organisation". We agree with Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, that "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."

As we have stated previously in many other occasions, all people, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, must be able to peacefully enjoy freedom of religion or belief as well as freedom of assembly without discrimination, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Russia's international commitments.

As the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the UN Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly and Association and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief stated in relation to the nationwide ban on Jehovah's witnesses in April 2017, "the use of counter-extremism legislation in this way to confine freedom of opinion, including religious belief, expression and association to that which is state-approved is unlawful and dangerous, and signals a dark future for all religious freedom in Russia."

We note the Russian response of 5 July 2018 to our statement, in which the delegation stated “there is nothing to stop the Jehovah’s Witnesses from freely practising their faith in Russia”. We also note their confirmation that the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office is examining the legality and justification for criminal prosecution of persons belonging to the Jehovah’s Witness faith. However, we remain concerned that this is in contradiction to the situation of many Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia who face persecution and criminal investigations. We would therefore welcome information on the research.

The EU reaffirms its resolute commitment to respect and promote freedom of religion or belief everywhere based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and universality. We also reiterate our previous statement that all people, including members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, must be able to peacefully enjoy freedom of religion or belief as well as freedom of assembly without discrimination, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and Russia’s international commitments, including Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. In light of this, we call upon 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.

The EU will continue to raise its concerns regarding violations of freedom of religion or belief and other human rights, including the persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Russian Federation and expect a substantive response.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, ANDORRA, SAN MARINO, AUSTRALIA and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.



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Follow

Jehovah's Witnesses must not be treated as extremists in Russia. Now they face extreme cruelty in prisons. This must be condemned in strongest way.

meduza

New details emerge on reported torture of Jehovah's Witnesses

New details emerge on reported torture of Jehovah's Witnesses — Meduza

Following mass searches and arrests near the Siberian city of Surgut earlier this month, several Jehovah's Witnesses being held in the city said they had been tort...

meduza.io

8:49 AM - 21 Feb 2019



Anders Samuelsen

@anderssamuelsen

Denne profil fører jeg ikke som udenrigsminister. Henvendelser til mig som minister om f.eks. konkrete sager bør rettes til udenrigsministeren@um.dk

liberalalliance.dk



Anders Samuelsen

@anderssamuelsen

Follow

Deeply concerned by sentencing of Dennis Christensen. Again call on [#Russia](#) to respect freedom of religion. Danish MFA will continue to follow closely and assist Dennis Christensen should he decide to appeal [#dkpol](#)

2:23 AM - 6 Feb 2019

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Mandates of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

REFERENCE:
AL RUS 22/2018

20 December 2018

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 33/30, 34/18, 32/32, 34/6, 31/16 and 31/3.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning allegations of arbitrary detention of Mr. **Dennis Christensen**, a Danish national and member of the religious minority Jehovah's Witnesses, by armed police and agents of the Federal Security Service; the continued criminalization of members of the Jehovah's Witnesses confession through the application of counter-extremism provisions of the Criminal Code, which has led to significant members of this religious group being subject to pre-trial detention; as well as other restrictive measures.

In the light of this new allegations, we would like to express our concern about what appears to be a pattern of persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation. This concern has been the subject of a previous communication to your Excellency's Government (AL RUS 19/2018 dated 14 September 2018), to which no response was received. Similar concerns have been previously communicated to your Excellency's Government (JAL RUS 2/2017, dated 23 March 2017, and JAL RUS 6/2015, dated 11 November 2015), to which responses were received on 25 March 2017 and 21 December 2015, respectively. Whilst we thank you for these responses, they do not allay the concerns expressed.

According to the information received:

On 25 May 2017, Mr. Christensen was arrested following a raid on a peaceful religious meeting in the city of Oryol. Since then, he has been held in pre-trial detention at Detention Centre No. 1 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Oryol, on charges of organizing extremist activities pursuant to Article 282.2(1) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. On 1 November 2018, a court decision

extended Mr. Christensen's pre-trial detention until 1 February 2019, which means that he will have spent more than 20 months in pre-trial detention.

The prosecution claims that Mr. Christensen was in charge of a local Jehovah's Witnesses organization in the city of Oryol, and continued to organize its activity after it was shut down. We have seen no evidence to support the prosecution's claim that Mr. Christensen's activities as a Jehovah's Witness incited hatred.

Since the 20 April 2017 decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to shut down the Jehovah's Witnesses national headquarters and all legal entities associated with it, there has been a continued criminalization of Jehovah's Witnesses activities through the application of counter-extremism provisions under the Criminal Code. At the time of the present communication, there is an estimated 85 similar criminal cases against Jehovah's witnesses. Out of them, 26 individuals were placed in pre-trial detention (including three women), and 59 individuals were subjected to court-imposed restrictions, including house arrests and travel bans.

Without prejudging the accuracy of the information made available to us, we are seeking Your Excellency's information to clarify these allegations. If they were to be confirmed, the facts alleged would contravene articles 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by the Russian Federation in 1979, which guarantee the universally-recognized rights not to be deprived arbitrarily of liberty, to due process and fair trial, to freedom of religion or belief, to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Enhanced concern is expressed that members of the Jehovah's Witnesses' confession are being prosecuted under counter-extremism provisions of the Criminal Code.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide the factual and legal grounds for the arrest and detention of Mr. Christensen.
3. Please provide justification for the lengthy pre-trial detention of Mr. Christensen, as well as the other Jehovah's Witnesses in pre-trial detention on similar charges and explain how this complies with the

obligation of the Russian Federation, in particular under article 9 of the ICCPR.

4. Please explain the factual and legal basis for the decision to shut down the Jehovah's Witnesses national headquarters and all legal entities associated with it
5. Please indicate what concrete measures have been taken to ensure that persons deprived of their liberty have the right to profess and practice their own religion or belief freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.
6. Please indicate what concrete measures have been taken to ensure that persons belonging to religious minorities, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, have the right to freely and peacefully manifest their own religion, without interference or any form of discrimination?

We would appreciate receiving a response within 60 days. Passed this delay, this communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#). They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please note that a communication concerning these alleged violations have also been sent to the Government of Denmark.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We would like to inform your Excellency's Government that after having transmitted an allegation letter to the Government, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention may transmit the case through its regular procedure in order to render an opinion on whether the deprivation of liberty was arbitrary or not. Such letters in no way prejudge any opinion the Working Group may render. The Government is required to respond separately to the allegation letter and the regular procedure.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Elina Steinerte
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

David Kaye
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion
and expression

Clement Nyaletsossi Voule

Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Fernand de Varennes
Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Ahmed Shaheed
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Fionnuala Ní Aoláin
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Annex
Reference to international human rights law

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to appeal to your Excellency's Government to take all necessary steps to secure the fundamental rights in accordance with the principles as set forth in articles 9, 18, 19, 21 and 22 and 27 of the ICCPR, ratified by the Russian Federation on 16 October 1973, guaranteeing the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of liberty, the right to freedom of religion, and freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

The right of Jehovah's Witnesses to religious practices and manifestations is safeguarded in article 18 (1) of the ICCPR, which emphasizes that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom [...] either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching". The Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 22 further provides that "Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions" and "[...] views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reasons, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility by a predominant religious community"(CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, para. 2).

We would also like to draw your Excellency's Government's attention to the 2010 judgment by the European Court of Human Rights, Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow v. Russia (302/02), where the Court found that the dissolution of the religious community constituted a violation of its members' right to freedom of religion or belief in breach of article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

We would like to further refer to Human Rights Council resolution 24/5 in which the Council "reminds States of their obligation to respect and fully protect the rights of all individuals to assemble peacefully and associate freely, online as well as offline, including in the context of elections and including persons espousing minority or dissenting views or beliefs, human rights defenders, trade unionists and others, including migrants, seeking to exercise or to promote these rights, and to take all necessary measures to ensure that any restrictions of the free exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law" (OP2, emphasis added).

We would like to further refer your Excellency's Government to the international standards in relation to the protection of the rights to persons belonging to religious minorities. Article 27 of the ICCPR establishes that in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities have the right, in community with the other members of their group, "to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language".

Furthermore, the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Declaration on the Rights of Minorities), establishes in article 1 the obligation of States to protect the existence and identity of religious minorities within their territories and to adopt the appropriate measures to achieve this end, and in article 2 that persons belonging to religious minorities have the right to profess and practice their own religion without discrimination. Moreover, States are required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities, including religious minorities, may exercise their human rights without discrimination and in full equality before the law (article 4.1).

We would also like to draw your Excellency's Government attention to the recommendations of the sixth session of the Forum on Minority Issues on "Guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities" (A/HRC/28/77 - 2013); in particular Recommendation 17, which calls on States to ensure that "there is no discriminatory treatment in regard to the legal and administrative recognition of all religious and belief groups. Any registration and administrative procedures, including those relating to the property and the functioning of places of worship and other religious-based institutions, should be conducted according to non-discrimination standards. International standards do not allow non-recognition of religious or belief groups to result in denial of their rights. Such standards require an inclusive approach to be taken".

SPECIAL REPORT

RUSSIA

STATE-SPONSORED
PERSECUTION OF
**JEHOVAH'S
WITNESSES
CONTINUES**

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
WORLD HEADQUARTERS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
1 KINGS DRIVE, TUXEDO PARK, NY 10987-5500
718-560-5000 OPI.GOV@JW.ORG

FEBRUARY 2019

On Wednesday, February 6, 2019, Dennis Christensen, a Danish citizen living in Oryol, Russia, was sentenced to a six-year prison term for practicing his faith.

The court ruling sets a dangerous precedent for dozens of pending criminal cases involving Jehovah's Witnesses in approximately 30 regions of Russia. More than 40 of these cases involve persons who are currently in detention or under house arrest.

Another EU citizen—Andrzej Oniszczyk, a Polish citizen with a temporary residency permit, is also in pre-trial detention under charges of 'financing and organizing extremist activity.'

Will Russia implement President Putin's comments, or continue persecuting its own citizens for peaceful worship?

Since early 2018, authorities throughout Russia began arresting and imprisoning Jehovah's Witnesses for practicing their faith—peacefully meeting together for worship, reading the Bible, and talking to others about their faith.

Police, OMON forces, and Federal Security Service (FSB) agents continue raiding private homes, using heavy-handed tactics against the Witnesses as though they were dealing with hardened criminals. The authorities point guns in the face of Witnesses, including children and the elderly—and manhandle them—causing emotional distress and physical harm.

"There is a clear contradiction between the stated position of the government of the Russian Federation and law enforcement practice. This is a cause for concern, as criminal prosecutions and arrests have become endemic." –Statement from Russia's Human Rights Council to the Prosecutor General's Office, June 20, 2018

“This certainly does not mean that we should label representatives of religious communities as members of destructive, much less terrorist, organizations. That is complete nonsense, this needs to be dealt with carefully...”

“Jehovah's Witnesses are Christians too, and I don't quite understand why they are persecuted either. So this should be looked into, this must be done.”

—President Vladimir Putin's comments at a meeting of the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, December 11, 2018.

SEPTEMBER 2017 TO JANUARY 2019

- 23** Witnesses jailed
- 27** under house arrest
- 41** ordered not to leave their hometown
- 121** Witnesses under investigation
- 300** home raids/searches

DENNIS CHRISTENSEN

Sentenced to a six-year prison term for practicing his faith



Dennis Christensen, a 46-year-old Danish citizen, was sentenced to six years imprisonment in Russia 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 extremist activity,’ under Article 282.2 (1) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (RF Criminal Code).

The decision has not entered into force. His attorneys believe that the verdict is unjust and will be appealing the decision. Mr. Christensen will remain in Detention Facility #1 in the Oryol Region.

Mr. Christensen was arrested on May 25, 2017, when heavily-armed police and Federal Security Service (FSB) agents raided a peaceful religious meeting in Oryol where he was attending. Since then, he has spent 622 days in pretrial detention and has appeared in over 50 court sessions since his trial began on February 2018.

Synopsis of the Case

Basis of the case. The case is based on court decisions that declared the Local Religious Organization (LRO) of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Oryol “extremist” (2016) and on the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to liquidate the Witnesses’ national headquarters and all of their legal entities in Russia (April 20, 2017; upheld July 17, 2017).

Position of the prosecution. As initiated by the FSB, the prosecution claimed that Mr. Christensen was in charge of the Oryol LRO and continued to organize its activity after it was liquidated. To substantiate their claim, the FSB collected “evidence” against Mr. Christensen—he opened the gate to the local Kingdom Hall, removed snow from the premises, and greeted and ushered fellow believers into the hall for worship. The FSB could not produce any victims who were allegedly victimized by Mr. Christensen’s religious activity.

Position of the defense. Mr. Christensen’s attorneys sought a full acquittal. Holding peaceful religious meetings is not a criminal offense. Although the Witnesses’ legal entities have been liquidated throughout the country, Russian officials have maintained that this does not revoke the Witnesses’ individual right to religious freedom, which is guaranteed by the Russian Constitution. Additionally, Mr. Christensen was never in charge or even a member of the Oryol LRO.



Police raid of religious service where Mr. Christensen was arrested



Dennis Christensen testifying in court

Christensen v. Russia filed with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). In June 2017, the Witnesses filed an application with the ECHR concerning Mr. Christensen’s pretrial detention and the arbitrary deprivation of his liberty as a result of his religious activity. On September 4, 2017, the ECHR communicated the application to the Russian Government.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Family: Dennis Ole Christensen was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, on December 18, 1972.

Education: In 1993, he received a diploma in construction at a trade school in the city of Haslev, Denmark.

Move to Russia: In 1995, he moved to Saint Petersburg, and in 1999 moved to Murmansk. There he met his wife, Irina, and married her in 2002. In 2006, they moved to Oryol.

Occupation: Mr. Christensen was self-employed, specializing in interior finishes. He was never a foreign missionary. He came to Oryol for personal reasons, not at the invitation of any organization.

Reaction of the International Community

4

Ms. Maja Kocijancic, Spokesperson for the External Action Service of the European Union:

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.

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/57728/statement-spokesperson-sentencing-dennis-christensen-russia_en

Ms. Kristina Arriaga, Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom:

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.

<https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/press-releases-statements/uscirf-condemns-russian-conviction-danish-prisoner-conscience>

Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

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.

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.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24145&LangID=E>

The co-rapporteurs for the monitoring of Russia Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:

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.

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=7366&lang=2&cat=3>

OTHER MEMBERS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES CURRENTLY ON TRIAL IN RUSSIA



Sergey Skrynnikov

Year of birth: 1962

First pretrial measure ruling: March 13, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

Current stage: Zheleznodorozhny District Court of the city of Oryol

In February 2018, authorities initiated charges of 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization' against Sergey Skrynnikov, based on a video recording of a public discourse that he had given a year earlier. The video had been made by an undercover FSB agent who subsequently delivered it to authorities. If convicted, Mr. Skrynnikov could face two to four years' imprisonment.



Yuriy Zalipayev

Year of birth: 1962

First pretrial measure ruling: April 24, 2018

Charges: 'engaging in extremist calls/appeals and inciting religious hatred,' under Articles 280(1) and 282(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current stage: Mayskiy District Court of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic

In August 2017, authorities initiated false charges of "extremist" activity against Yuriy Zalipayev, based on a raid at the Witnesses' local house of worship in August 2016. During the raid, the FSB planted literature from the Federal List of Extremist Materials, leading to the charge that Mr. Zalipayev distributed banned literature. His trial continues in the Mayskiy District Court of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic.



Arkadya Akopyan

Year of birth: 1948

First pretrial measure ruling: May 3, 2017

Charges: 'inciting religious hatred,' under Article 282(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current stage: Appeal from prosecutor requesting his criminal case be terminated

On December 27, 2018, the Prokhladny District Court of the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria found Mr. Akopyan guilty of 'inciting religious hatred,' based on false claims that he had made defamatory statements during a sermon he had given at a house of worship and had distributed "extremist" literature. The court sentenced Mr. Akopyan to 120 hours of community service. On January 10, 2019, the prosecutor filed an appeal against the decision and requested that his criminal case be terminated in view of recent amendments to Article 282 of the Criminal Code.

CRIMINALIZING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES FOR PEACEFUL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

For over a decade, Russian authorities have grossly misapplied legislation on extremism to the peaceful religious activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. During that time, the authorities created a legal veneer to criminalize the Witnesses' worship. Finally, on April 20, 2017, the Russian Federation Supreme Court ruled to liquidate the national office of Jehovah's Witnesses and 395 LROs. Since then, the situation in Russia has deteriorated considerably.

Rather than fight extremism, Russia is persecuting its own citizens for their peaceful worship.

Now, Jehovah's Witnesses are labelled as "extremists," and Russian authorities are treating them as if they were dangerous criminals.

The Russian government has directly violated its guarantees made in open court that the ban on the legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses would not affect the rights of individual Witnesses to practice their faith.

Russia has completely disregarded this guarantee and is grossly misapplying its own laws, criminally charging the Witnesses with participating in, organizing, or financing "extremist" activity.

6



The following pages list members of Jehovah's Witnesses who are in pretrial detention, house arrest, or ordered not to leave their hometown.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN PRETRIAL DETENTION IN RUSSIA



Aleksandr Akopov

Year of birth: 1992

Detained: December 12, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Stavropol Region



Sergey Britvin

Year of birth: 1965

Detained: July 22, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Kemerovo Region



Vladimir Atryakhin

Year of birth: 1987

Detained: February 6, 2019

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Republic of Mordovia



Aleksey Budenchuk

Year of birth: 1982

Detained: June 12, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Saratov Region



Dmitriy Barmakin

Year of birth: 1974

Detained: July 28, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Primorskiy Territory



Sergey Klimov

Year of birth: 1970

Detained: June 3, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Tomsk Region



Konstantin Bazhenov

Year of birth: 1975

Detained: June 12, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Saratov Region



Vadim Levchuk

Year of birth: 1972

Detained: July 22, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current location: Detention Center #1 in Kemerovo Region

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN PRETRIAL DETENTION IN RUSSIA

(continued)



Feliks Makhammadiyev

Year of birth: 1984
Detained: June 12, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Saratov Region



Konstantin Samsonov

Year of birth: 1977
Detained: December 9, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Stavropol Region



Valeriy Moskalenko

Year of birth: 1967
Detained: August 2, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Khabarovsk Territory



Yuriy Savelyev

Year of birth: 1954
Detained: November 9, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Novosibirsk Region

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Georgiy Nikulin

Year of birth: N/A
Detained: February 6, 2019
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Republic of Mordovia



Andrey Sazonov

Year of birth: 1980
Detained: February 6, 2019
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area



Andrzej Oniszcuk POLISH CITIZEN

Year of birth: 1968
Detained: October 9, 2018
Charges: 'organizing and financing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) and 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Kirov Region



Aleksandr Shevchuk

Year of birth: 1989
Detained: February 6, 2019
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Republic of Mordovia



Nataliya Sorokina

Year of birth: 1975
Detained: October 7, 2018
Charges: ‘participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Smolensk Region



Shamil Sultanov

Year of birth: 1977
Detained: December 9, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Stavropol Region



Yevgeniy Spirin

Year of birth: 1986
Detained: January 28, 2019
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Ivanovo Region



Yevgeniy Suvorkov

Year of birth: 1978
Detained: October 9, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing and financing the activity of extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) and 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Kirov Region

9



Andrey Stupnikov

Year of birth: 1973
Detained: July 3, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Krasnoyarsk Territory



Mariya Troshina

Year of birth: 1977
Detained: October 7, 2018
Charges: ‘participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code
Current location: Detention Center #1 in Smolensk Region

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN RUSSIA



Vladimir Alushkin

Year of birth: 1964

Detained: July 15, 2018

Charges: 'organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Khasan Kogut

Year of birth: 1983

Detained: February 6, 2019

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Ilkham Karimov

Year of birth: 1981

Detained: May 27, 2018

Charges: 'organizing, recruiting participation, and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (1.1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Vladimir Korobeynikov

Year of birth: 1952

Detained: October 9, 2018

Charges: 'organizing and financing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) and 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code



Maksim Khalturin

Year of birth: 1974

Detained: October 9, 2018

Charges: 'organizing and financing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) and 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code



Vladimir Kulyasov

Year of birth: 1974

Detained: July 15, 2018

Charges: 'organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Stanislav Kim

Year of birth: 1968

Detained: November 10, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Anton Lemeshev

Year of birth: 1987

Detained: October 18, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Andrey Magliv

Year of birth: 1984
Detained: July 15, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Valentin Osadchuk

Year of birth: 1976
Detained: April 19, 2018
Charges: ‘participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Dmitriy Malevaniy

Year of birth: 1990
Detained: November 25, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Olga Panyuta

Year of birth: 1959
Detained: November 25, 2018
Charges: ‘recruiting participation in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1.1) of RF Criminal Code



Konstantin Matrashov

Year of birth: 1988
Detained: May 27, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing, recruiting participation, and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1), (1.1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Konstantin Petrov

Year of birth: 1986
Arrested: May 30, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Olga Opaleva

Year of birth: 1952
Detained: November 25, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Nikolay Polevodov

Year of birth: 1970
Detained: November 10, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN RUSSIA

(continued)



Sergey Polyakov

Year of birth: 1972
Detained: July 4, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Denis Timoshin

Year of birth: 1980
Detained: July 15, 2018
Charges: 'organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Anastasiya Polyakova

Year of birth: 1984
Detained: July 4, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Aleksey Trofimov

Year of birth: 1959
Detained: November 25, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

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Ivan Puyda

Year of birth: 1978
Detained: May 30, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Anatoliy Vilitkevich

Year of birth: 1986
Arrested: April 10, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Andrey Suvorkov

Year of birth: 1993
Detained: October 9, 2018
Charges: 'organizing and financing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) and 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code



Sergey Yerkin

Year of birth: 1953
Detained: May 30, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Aydar Yulmetyev

Year of birth: 1993

Detained: May 29, 2018

Charges: 'organizing, recruiting participation, and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (1.1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Yevgeniy Zyablov

Year of birth: 1977

Detained: May 30, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Vitaliy Zhuk

Year of birth: 1972

Detained: November 10, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ORDERED NOT TO LEAVE THEIR HOMETOWN



Arkadya Akopyan

ON APPEAL

Year of birth: 1948

First pretrial measure ruling:
May 3, 2017

Charges: 'inciting religious hatred,' under Article 282(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current stage: Sentenced by Prokhladny District Court to 120 hours community service. Prosecutor is requesting that criminal case be terminated.



Alam Aliev

Year of birth: 1963

First pretrial measure ruling:
May 18, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Aleksey Arkhipov

Year of birth: 1960

First pretrial measure ruling:
June 22, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

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Sergey Skrynnikov

ON TRIAL

Year of birth: 1962

First pretrial measure ruling:
March 13, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

Current stage: Zheleznodorozhnyi District Court



Konstantin Bazhenov

Year of birth: 1977

First pretrial measure ruling:
August 19, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Yuriy Zalipayev

ON TRIAL

Year of birth: 1962

First pretrial measure ruling:
April 24, 2018

Charges: Articles 280(1) and 282(1) of RF Criminal Code

Current stage: Mayskiy District Court of Kabardino-Balkarian Republic



Snezhanna Bazhenova

Year of birth: 1977

First pretrial measure ruling:
August 19, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Aleksey Berchuk

Year of birth: 1975
First pretrial measure ruling: January 21, 2019
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



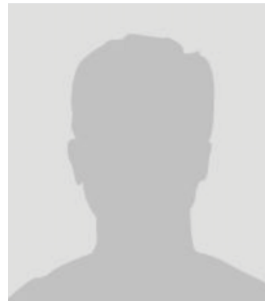
Gennadiy German

Year of birth: 1969
First pretrial measure ruling: June 14, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Venera Dulova

Year of birth: 1968
First pretrial measure ruling: August 1, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Dmitriy Golik

Year of birth: 1987
First pretrial measure ruling: July 20, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



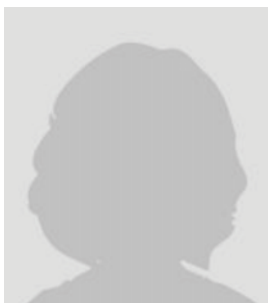
Sergey Filatov

Year of birth: 1972
First pretrial measure ruling: November 16, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Roman Gridasov

Year of birth: 1978
First pretrial measure ruling: June 14, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Lyubov Galaktionova

Year of birth: 1942
First pretrial measure ruling: April 19, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

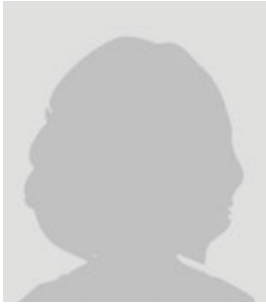


Igor Ivashin

Year of birth: 1976
First pretrial measure ruling: July 2, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ORDERED NOT TO LEAVE THEIR HOMETOWN

(continued)



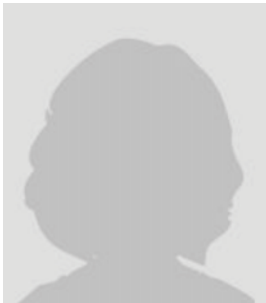
Maya Karpushkina

Year of birth: Unknown
First pretrial measure ruling: November 10, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Sergey Ledenyov

Year of birth: 1974
First pretrial measure ruling: December 2, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Nailya Kogay

Year of birth: 1951
First pretrial measure ruling: April 19, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Pavel Lekontsev

Year of birth: 1981
First pretrial measure ruling: May 16, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

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Valeriy Kriger

Year of birth: 1968
First pretrial measure ruling: June 29, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



Sergey Logunov

Year of birth: 1962
First pretrial measure ruling: May 16, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Viktor Kuchkov

Year of birth: 1967
Detained: September 17, 2018
Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



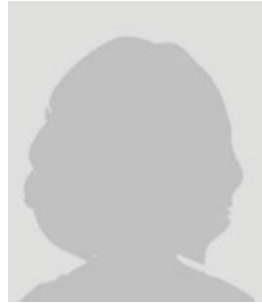
Aleksey Matveev

Year of birth: 1983
First pretrial measure ruling: May 16, 2018
Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Dmitriy Mikhailov

Year of birth: 1977
Detained: May 29, 2018
Charges: ‘participating and financing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) and 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code



Nina Purge

Year of birth: 1940
First pretrial measure ruling: April 19, 2018
Charges: ‘participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Yelena Mikhailova

Year of birth: 1983
First pretrial measure ruling: June 27, 2018
Charges: ‘participating and financing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) and 282.3 (1) of RF Criminal Code



Sergey Rayman

Year of birth: 1996
First pretrial measure ruling: July 25, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1), (2) of RF Criminal Code

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Aleksey Miretskiy

Year of birth: 1975
First pretrial measure ruling: June 14, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code



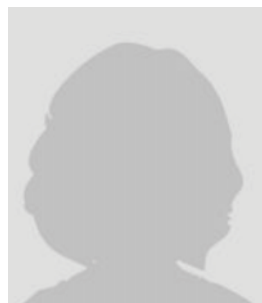
Valeriya Rayman

Year of birth: 1993
First pretrial measure ruling: July 25, 2018
Charges: ‘organizing and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Aleksandr Prianikov

Year of birth: 1987
First pretrial measure ruling: September 21, 2018
Charges: ‘participating in the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Svetlana Ryzhkova

Year of birth: 1953
First pretrial measure ruling: June 27, 2018
Charges: ‘participating and financing the activity of an extremist organization,’ under Article 282.2(2), 282.3(1) of RF Criminal Code

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ORDERED NOT TO LEAVE THEIR HOMETOWN

(continued)



Svetlana Sedova

Year of birth: 1969

First pretrial measure ruling: November 10, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Igor Turik

Year of birth: 1968

Detained: September 17, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

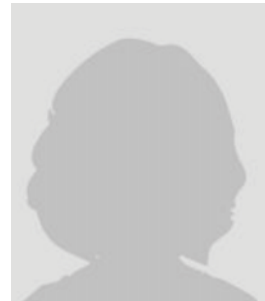


Svetlana Shishina

Year of birth: 1975

First pretrial measure ruling: June 22, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Raisa Usanova

Year of birth: 1947

First pretrial measure ruling: April 19, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

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Zinaida Soldatova

Year of birth: 1967

First pretrial measure ruling: June 12, 2018

Charges: 'organizing, recruiting participation, and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (1.1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Yelena Zayshchuk

Year of birth: 1934

First pretrial measure ruling: April 19, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Valentina Stepkina

Year of birth: 1951

First pretrial measure ruling: June 6, 2018

Charges: 'organizing, recruiting participation, and participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1), (1.1), (2) of RF Criminal Code



Nikolay Zhugin

Year of birth: 1976

First pretrial measure ruling: May 16, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code

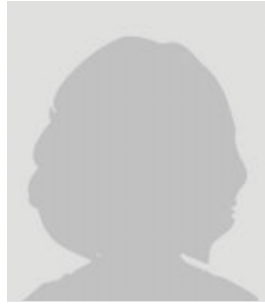


Tatyana Zhuk

Year of birth: 1973

First pretrial measure ruling:
November 10, 2018

Charges: 'participating in the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(2) of RF Criminal Code



Vera Zolotova

Year of birth: 1946

First pretrial measure ruling:
August 19, 2018

Charges: 'organizing the activity of an extremist organization,' under Article 282.2(1) of RF Criminal Code

STATE CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY

On August 17, 2017, nearly four months after the Supreme Court decision to ban and liquidate the Witnesses' legal entities, the Ministry of Justice added the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia (the Witnesses' national office) to the list of banned organizations in Russia. Soon after, the Russian government began legal proceedings to seize properties owned by the Administrative Center (located near St. Petersburg) and the Witnesses' 395 local legal entities throughout the country.

These properties are valued at over \$90 million. The key piece of property is the Administrative Center—an office and residential complex valued at approximately \$30 million. **The property used by the Administrative Center was owned by a U.S. corporation, the Watchtower, Bible, and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.**

- On **December 7, 2017**, the Sestroretskiy District Court annulled a long-standing contract on the property used by the Administrative Center, opening the way for the State to seize the property.
- On **May 3, 2018**, the Saint Petersburg City Court upheld the December 7 decision.
- On **August 3, 2018**, the court ruled in favor of the government and transferred ownership of the Administrative Center property, ordering it to be officially registered in the name of the Russian Federation.

In addition to the Administrative Center property, the Russian government is also confiscating the buildings that Jehovah's Witnesses had previously used as houses of worship.

- The authorities have already confiscated nearly 100 properties, and more than 300 additional properties are in danger of being confiscated. Many of these properties are owned by legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses based in various countries in Europe. Their total value is approximately \$60 million.



Administrative Center of
Jehovah's Witnesses' in Russia

RAIDS

The following are some examples of the dozens of aggressive police raids on the homes of Jehovah's Witnesses that have occurred since early 2018:



1 April 18, 2018. Polyarniy, Murmansk Region. Heavily armed riot police raided the homes of three Witnesses. The officers kicked down doors, threw people to the floor, threatened the Witnesses with weapons, and roughly forced women and minors to stand with their face to the wall and their hands up. The police seized personal items—tablets, telephones, documents, and Bible-based literature.

At the home of 44-year-old Roman Markin, police broke down the door with a battering ram and threatened him at gunpoint. Mr. Markin's 16-year-old daughter was present at the time and immediately put her hands on her head and lay flat on the floor.

In all, the police took 15 Witnesses, including minors, to the station for an interrogation lasting from 1:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. The investigators initiated criminal charges against Roman Markin and 61-year-old Viktor Trofimov under Article 282.2(1) of the Russian Federation Criminal Code (organizing the activity of an extremist organization). Both men were sentenced to pretrial detention and later placed under house arrest.



Konstantin Bazhenov,
Feliks Makhammadiyev and
Aleksey Budenchuk in court

- 2 May 17, 2018. Birobidzhan.** In a sting operation code-named Judgment Day, 150 police officers and members of the FSB raided 22 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. The police seized tablets, cell phones, and money. Police arrested and imprisoned Alam Aliev, one of the 34 Witnesses searched during the raids. On May 18, the Birobidzhanskiy District Court ordered that he be kept in pretrial detention until July 13, 2018, under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization). Mr. Aliev appealed, and on May 25, 2018, the court ordered his release. The investigator ordered him to sign an agreement not to leave the city.
- 3 June 12, 2018, Saratov and Village of Shirokoye, Saratov Region.** Law enforcement officers searched at least seven homes involving about 20 Jehovah's Witnesses. Police broke down apartment doors, behaved very rudely, and seized all electronic devices, books, photographs, personal notes, foreign passports, and cash. In at least two homes, the police planted banned religious publications of Jehovah's Witnesses. They took more than ten Witnesses to the FSB office for interrogation and held them until nearly midnight. Criminal cases were initiated against six Witnesses under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization). Konstantin Bazhenov, Feliks Makhammadiyev, and Alexey Budenchuk were put in pretrial detention. Three others, Gennadiy German, Roman Gridasov, and Alexey Miretsky, were ordered to sign an agreement not to leave the city.
- 4 June 30–July 1, 2018. Lensk, Republic of Sakha-Yakutia.** At 5:30 p.m., police forces raided the homes of eight Witnesses and seized personal belongings, including photographs, flash and hard drives, mobile phones, computers, and different Bible translations. The police escorted 22 people to the police station, detained them for up to five hours, and interrogated most of them. During the interrogations, the investigators revealed that the Witnesses had been kept under surveillance for more than six months. After the interrogation, one woman was hospitalized because of a psychological breakdown, and another woman suffered a miscarriage. The investigators initiated a criminal case against 42-year-old Igor Ivashin under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization) and ordered him to sign an agreement not to leave the city.

-
- 5 July 4, 2018. Omsk, Omsk Region.** At 7:00 a.m., police forces raided the homes of at least four Witnesses and searched their houses, land plots, outbuildings, and vehicles until 3:00 p.m. Sergey and Anastasia Polyakov were asleep when the police invaded their home. Even though Mr. Polyakov offered no resistance, the police beat him severely. The investigators initiated criminal cases against both of them under Article 282.2(2) (participating in the activities of an extremist organization). Both husband and wife were sentenced to pretrial detention and later placed under house arrest.
- 6 July 15, 2018. Penza, Penza Region.** Around 4:00 p.m., police forces raided four locations where Witnesses had gathered for a peaceful meeting. In some locations the police mocked, humiliated, and threatened the Witnesses. In one location, a female investigator made personal searches of six female Witnesses, completely stripping them one by one. The police seized all electronic devices and storage media, printed photographs, personal notes, and notebooks. They detained approximately 40 adults and took them to the police station—leaving the children unattended in their homes. The investigators initiated a criminal case against Vladimir Alushkin under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization). Mr. Alushkin was placed in pretrial detention until January 14, 2019, and later placed under house arrest. The investigators also initiated criminal cases against Vladimir Kulyasov, Andrey Magliv, and Denis Timoshin under Article 282.2(2) (participating in the activities of an extremist organization). All three were placed under house arrest.
- 7 July 19, 2018. Razdolnoye, Primorskiy Territory.** Seven people, including three armed men wearing masks, broke into the apartment of 75-year-old Witness Mr. VF and his 72-year-old wife, LF, and shouted: “Lie down! Hands behind your back!” They forced Mr. VF’s hands behind his back, knocked him down, and bruised his nose and cheek. The elderly couple’s ill 52-year-old daughter lost consciousness as a result of the shock, and the mother suffered a severe hypertensive crisis. An ambulance had to be called for both mother and daughter. The investigator seized their electronic devices, Bible literature, and Bibles, including valuable antique editions from 1907. Investigators interrogated the father, mother, and daughter until 2:30 a.m. During the interrogation, Mrs. LF again had to call for an ambulance.



Arrest of Sergey Rayman

8 July 25, 2018. Kostroma, Kostroma Region. Riot police forces raided the homes of Witnesses in Kostroma, including the home of Sergey and Valeria Rayman, a young couple in their 20's. The police seized all electronic devices and Bibles and made derogatory remarks about the Witnesses' beliefs. At 7:00 a.m., police searched the home of Mrs. Rayman's mother, M.L., and seized electronic devices, a computer, a printer, a Bible, and personal publications. Investigators initiated a criminal case against the Raymans under Articles 282.2(1) and (2) (organizing and participating in the activities of an extremist organization). Mr. Rayman was placed in pretrial detention and later placed under house arrest. Mrs. Rayman was placed under restrictions, including a curfew, for the same period of time as her husband's detention and house arrest. Presently, they both remain under restrictions.



Andrey Suvorkov, Maksim Khalturin, Andrzej Oniszczyk, Vladimir Korobeynikov, and Yevgeniy Suvorkov in court

9 October 9, 2018. Kirov, Kirov Region. Police and masked special forces raided the homes of at least 15 Witnesses in Kirov. Police placed Andrzej Oniszczyk, Vladimir Korobeynikov, Andrey Suvorkov, Evgeniy Suvorkov, and Maksim Khalturin in 72-hour police detention. Investigators initiated charges against the five men under Articles 282.2(1) and 282.3(1) (organizing and financing the activity of an extremist organization.)

On October 11, 2018, the Pervomayskiy District Court in Kirov ordered that Mr. Khalturin and Andrey Suvorov be placed in pretrial detention until December 1, 2018. On October 12, the Pervomayskiy District Court similarly ordered that Mr. Oniszczyk, Mr. Korobeynikov, and Evgeniy Suvorov be placed in pretrial detention until December 2, 2018. The court later placed Mr. Korobeynikov under house arrest and extended the detention of the four other men until February 2, 2019.

Mr. Oniszczyk is a Polish citizen, who has been living in Russia under a temporary residence permit. His wife has been in contact with the Poland Embassy in Moscow.

10 November 8, 2018. Novosibirsk, Novosibirsk Region. Law enforcement officers led by the Investigative Committee of Russia carried out mass searches in the homes of ten Witnesses in Novosibirsk. The police confiscated phones, tablets, and other personal belongings. During the raid on one apartment where a small group of Witnesses had gathered, the police officers pointed their automatic weapons at everyone present. The Witnesses, including one minor, were traumatized by the aggressive actions of the officers.

Authorities initiated criminal charges against Mr. Yuriy Savelyev, under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization). A court sentenced Mr. Savelyev to pretrial detention until January 7, 2019, later extended until March 7.

11 November 10, 2018. Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Territory. A group of around 50 Witnesses was at a friendly gathering at a café when 30-35 FSB officers and OMON forces stormed into the room. The officers seized personal items and interrogated, fingerprinted, and photographed all of the Witnesses present, including minors. The ordeal lasted five hours. The officers also searched the apartments of three of the Witnesses at the gathering, and two other residences of Witnesses who had not attended the gathering.

Authorities initiated charges against three male Witnesses, Nikolay Polevodov, Stanislav Kim, and Vitaliy Zhuk under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization) and against three female Witnesses, Tatiana Zhuk, Maya Karpushkina, and Svetlana Sedova, under Article 282.2(2) (participating in the activity of an extremist organization). The men were sentenced to pretrial detention, and the women were required to sign an agreement not to leave the area. On January 14, 2019, the Khabarovskiy Territorial Court released Mr. Polevodov and Mr. Zhuk from prison and placed them under house arrest until April 9, 2019. The court extended Kim's detention until January 9, 2019, but he has since been released and placed under house arrest.

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12 November 16, 2018. Crimea. In one of the largest operations targeting religious worshippers in the history of modern Russia, a group of some 200 law enforcement officers, including FSB agents and OMON forces, raided at least eight homes of Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea.

Due to the stress caused by the invasion of armed and masked police, two older Witnesses experienced a severe spike in their blood pressure and had to be taken to the hospital. A 22-year-old Witness suffered a miscarriage. After being pinned against the wall, handcuffed, and beaten by officers, a 78-year-old Witness, Aleksandr Ursu, was rushed to the hospital.

At this time, only one Witness, Sergey Filatov, is facing criminal charges. The authorities have charged him under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization), and the court ordered that he sign an agreement not to leave the area.

13 December 9, 2018. Neftekumsk, Stavropol Territory. Police forces raided the homes of at least seven Witnesses in Neftekumsk. Ten to 15 officers carried out each raid. Most arrived in army trucks, wore masks and riot gear, and brandished automatic weapons. The officers confiscated publications, phones, computers, personal notes, notebooks, hard drives, money, photographs, and other personal items.

During one raid, Ms. Samsonov was subjected to a personal search after she was forced to strip naked in the presence of female police officers. Her minor son was also made to strip down to his underwear. During another raid, the officers would not allow a handicapped woman to use the bathroom when she requested to do so. The officers' aggressive search at another location caused a small child to panic and cry in fear. The officers' search at another home caused a female Witness to need assistance from the emergency medical services.

Authorities initiated charges against Aleksandr Akopov, Shamil Sultanov, and Konstantin Samsonov, under Article 282.2(1) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (organizing the activity of an extremist organization). The investigator offered the Witnesses freedom in exchange for renouncing their faith. They refused his offer.

On December 11, a court sentenced Mr. Sultanov and Mr. Samsonov to pretrial detention until February 6, 2019. On December 12, Mr. Akopov was summoned to the police station. The following day, he was sentenced to pretrial detention until February 6, 2019.

14 January 20, 2019. Island of Sakhalin. Special police forces raided 11 homes of Witnesses in the city of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and in the towns of Nevelsk and Nogliki. In Nogliki, the police punched homeowner Aleksandr Ryndin in the face when he opened the door and threw him to the ground. They questioned his 14-year-old son in the presence of his school teacher, who was brought along by the police to serve as an attesting witness. The officers seized tablets, phones, computers, and books. No one was arrested at the time. However, a criminal case was initiated against 57-year-old Sergey Kulakov, under Article 282.2(1) (organizing the activity of an extremist organization).

SEEKING RELIEF THROUGH INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS

48 Applications pending with the ECHR

10 Complaints pending with the CCPR

6 Complaints pending with the UN WGAD

	APPLICATIONS	COMPLAINTS	COMPLAINTS
Liquidation of National Religious Organization	1		
Liquidation of Local Religious Organization, Registration	5	4	
Censorship of Religious Literature and Website	8	2	
Revocation of Permit to Import Religious Literature	1		
Detention or Criminal Conviction for Practicing Religion	9	4	6
Prosecution/Detention for Evangelizing	4		
Seizure of Religious Literature in Transport	1	1	
Home Search, Literature Seized	7		
Raid on or Interference With Religious Meeting	11		
Denial of Alternative Service	1		

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MEETINGS WITH OFFICIALS

Except for members of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights, Russian government officials have refused to meet with Jehovah's Witnesses.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OBJECTIVES

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO:

- 1.** End the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and stop all raids, arrests, interrogations, and criminal investigations for peaceful religious activity.
- 2.** Annul the April 2017 Supreme Court decision that banned and liquidated all properties owned or used by the Witnesses.
- 3.** Release Dennis Christensen and other Witnesses in detention.
- 4.** Remove the Witnesses' religious literature, including the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, from the Federal List of Extremist Material.
- 5.** Apply international standards as recommended by the Venice Commission to legislation on extremism.
- 6.** Abide by Russia's Constitution and respect international law, including the judgments of the ECHR.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact the Office of Public Information for Jehovah's Witnesses at OPIGov@jw.org.



Visit the Newsroom at jw.org or scan here to learn about legal developments and human rights affecting Jehovah's Witnesses.

