

SPECIAL REPORT

# RUSSIA

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

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# 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 pretrial 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 have been 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 Zheleznodorozhnyi 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 FSB agents raided a peaceful religious meeting in Oryol that 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 in February 2018.

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## 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 of the Oryol LRO or even a member of it.



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 St. Petersburg, and he moved to Murmansk in 1999. 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 moved 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](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.uscifr.gov/news-room/press-releases-statements/uscifr-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>

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



### Sergey Skrynnikov

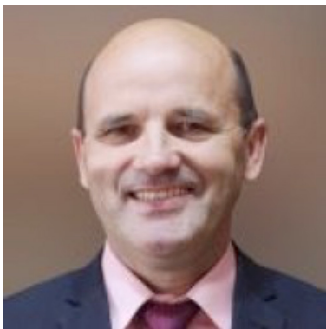
**Year of birth:** 1962

**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:** Zheleznodorozhniy 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

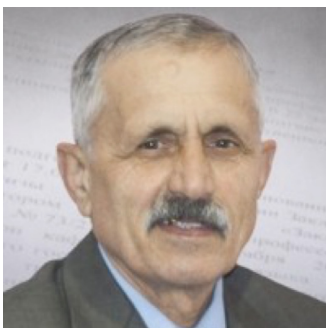
**Year of birth:** 1962

**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 the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria

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 the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria.



### 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 that his criminal case be terminated

On December 27, 2018, the Prokhladniy 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 labeled 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.

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

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## 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

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# 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



## **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





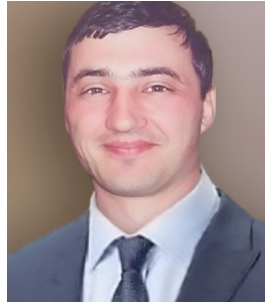
### **Nataliya Sorokina**

**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



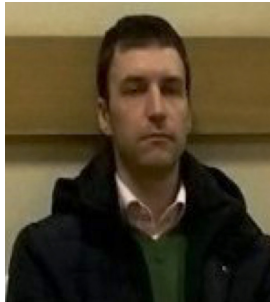
### **Shamil Sultanov**

**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



### **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

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## 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

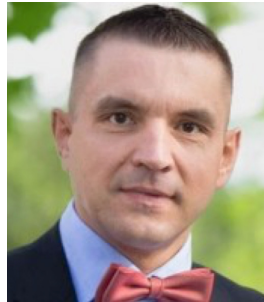


### **Andrey Magliv**

**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

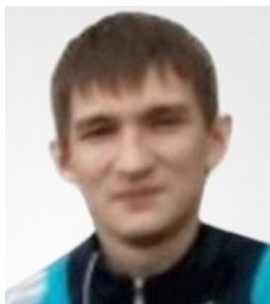


### **Olga Panyuta**

**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



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## 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

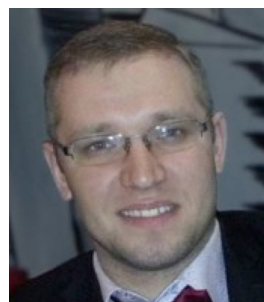


### Ivan Puyda

**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



**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:** Zheleznodorozhny 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:** '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 Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria



**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

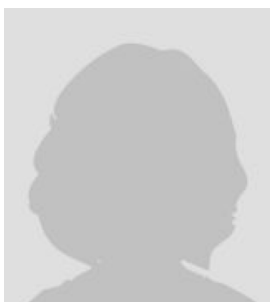


### **Roman Gridasov**

**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

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# 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

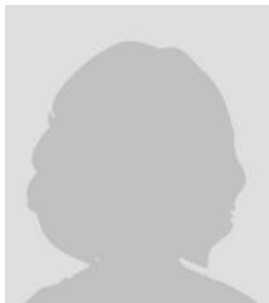


## Sergey Ledenyov

**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



## 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



### **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

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# JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ORDERED NOT TO LEAVE THEIR HOMETOWN

(continued)

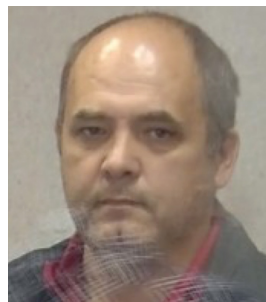


## Svetlana Sedova

**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

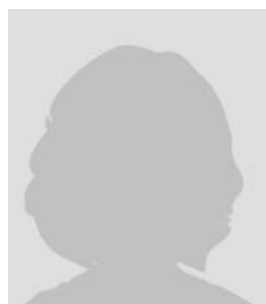


## Svetlana Shishina

**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

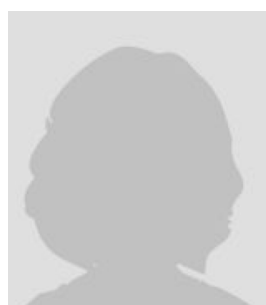


## Zinaida Soldatova

**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



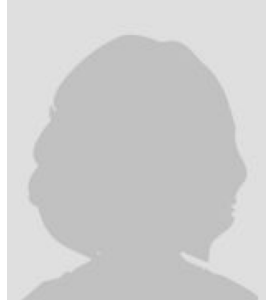
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### **Tatyana Zhuk**

**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

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## 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 LROs 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 Administrative Center is owned by a U.S. corporation, the Watch Tower 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



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## 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. Polyarny, 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.

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**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.

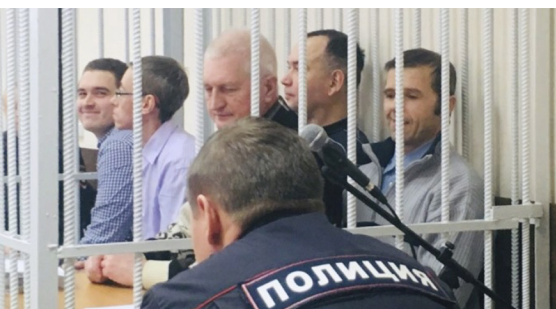
**6 July 15, 2018. Penza, Penza Region.** Around 4:00 p.m., police forces raided four locations where Witnesses had gathered for a peaceful meeting. In some locations the police mocked, humiliated, and threatened the Witnesses. In one location, a female investigator made personal searches of six female 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. V.F. and his 72-year-old wife, L.F., and shouted: “Lie down! Hands behind your back!” They forced Mr. V.F.’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. L.F. 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 Oniszcuk, 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 Oniszcuk, Vladimir Korobeynikov, Andrey Suvorkov, Yevgeniy 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 Suvorkov be placed in pretrial detention until December 1, 2018. On October 12, the Pervomayskiy District Court similarly ordered that Mr. Oniszcuk, Mr. Korobeynikov, and Yevgeniy Suvorkov 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. Oniszcuk 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.



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**11 November 10, 2018. Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Territory.** A group of around 50 Witnesses was at a friendly gathering at a café when 30 to 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 searched the apartments of three of the Witnesses at the gathering. They also searched two nearby homes of Witnesses who had not even 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 Mr. Kim’s detention until January 9, 2019, but he has since been released and placed under house arrest.

**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.

Because of 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.

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**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, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, 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) (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 schoolteacher, 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

**11** 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		

27

## 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

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## **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](mailto:OPIGov@jw.org).



Visit the Newsroom at [jw.org](http://jw.org) or scan here to learn about legal developments and human rights affecting Jehovah's Witnesses.

