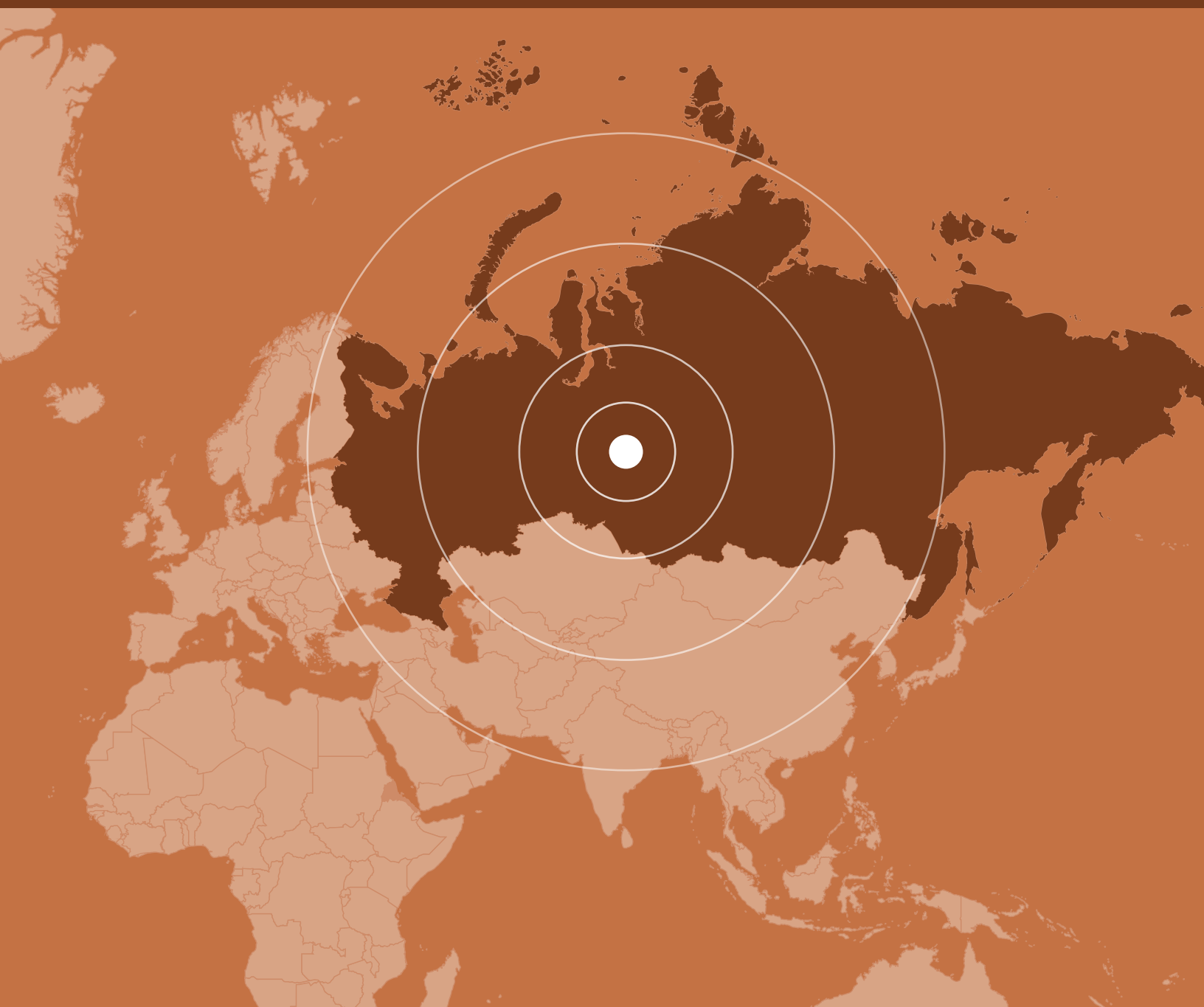


EIGHTH-ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL REPORT

Russia's Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses





Since Russia's Supreme Court effectively banned Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017, the authorities continue to imprison men, women, the elderly, and even the infirm, for engaging in peaceful religious activities such as praying, singing Christian songs, or discussing the Bible. The frequency and length of the sentences have increased, with the maximum term now reaching eight years. Additionally, hundreds of family heads have been placed on Russia's national list of extremists, making it challenging for them to secure employment and support their families.

From Home Raids to Prison Cells

Law enforcement officers, often in full combat gear, have conducted over 2,170 raids. By sharing video footage of these home raids, authorities aim to present an image of combating dangerous extremists.

Since 2017 in Russia and Crimea:

(AS OF MARCH 1, 2025)

850

PROSECUTED AS OF
FEBRUARY 28, 2025


643 MEN


207 WOMEN



588

ADDED TO THE FEDERAL LIST
OF EXTREMISTS/TERRORISTS
(ROSFINMONITORING)

Being on this publicly accessible list stigmatizes believers, hindering their ability to find employment. Other consequences include having their bank accounts blocked and facing difficulties in obtaining or renewing insurance policies, selling property, managing investments, receiving inheritances, or even purchasing mobile phone SIM cards.

583

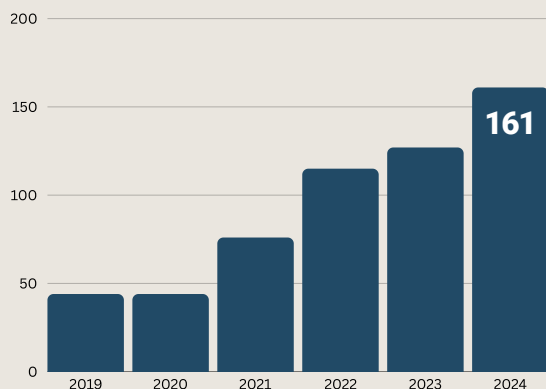
CONVICTIONS

460

INDIVIDUALS HAVE SPENT
TIME IN PRISON

161

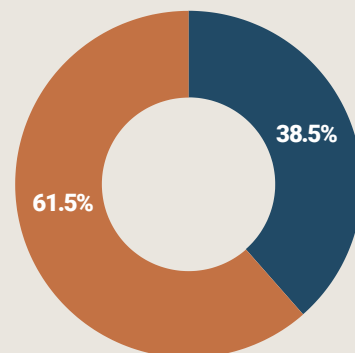
STILL INCARCERATED (CONVICTED
OR AWAITING SENTENCING)



5+

YEARS

124 OF 198 PEOPLE
CONVICTED RECEIVED
SENTENCES LONGER
THAN FIVE YEARS



8 YEARS

LONGEST PRISON SENTENCE IMPOSED
ON SIX MEN (E.G., ALEXANDER CHAGAN)

Perspective: According to statistics published by the Supreme Court of Russia, of the 588 people convicted for intentional infliction of grievous bodily harm in the first six months of 2024, only 1.87% (11 people) were sentenced to terms of five to eight years

“Russian authorities have gone another year arresting Jehovah’s Witnesses in their homes, separating husbands from wives and parents from children. Some men have been imprisoned hundreds of kilometers away, making it very difficult for their families to afford to visit. Based largely on misinformation, Russia’s legal system has equated peaceful worship with extremism. We respectfully implore the Russian government to give us the opportunity to address the misconceptions that have fueled the persecution and led the authorities to disregard the constitutional and international protections afforded our peaceful religious beliefs and practices.”

– JARROD LOPES, A SPOKESMAN FOR JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

Physical Mistreatment

Since the 2017 ban, at least 70 Jehovah’s Witnesses have been subjected to physical violence or torture in Russia. For example:



2024: Rinat Kiramov was beaten and tortured on at least two occasions, including waterboarding and being tased with a stun gun, for not providing personal information about fellow believers



2021: Officers in Irkutsk physically assaulted two couples, stripping Anatoly Razdobarov naked and torturing him by attempting to force a glass bottle into his buttocks



2019: Police in Surgut tortured seven men using tactics that included suffocation and electrocution

Elderly and Infirm Not Exempt

Nearly a third of the targeted Witnesses are over 60. For example:



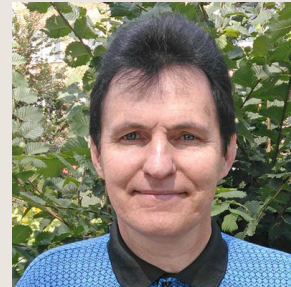
Boris Andreyev (73)

Serving a six-year sentence.



Tatyana Piskareva (68)

Sentenced to forced labor.



Andrey Vlasov (73)

A disabled believer denied sufficient medical care in prison. Despite having a degenerative joint disease, he has been repeatedly refused early release.

Impact on Families

Restrictions have significantly impacted families, with over 80 families facing multiple prosecutions involving parents, spouses, and their adult children.

Yekaterina Olshevskaya, separated from her imprisoned husband, [Anton], who is serving a six-years and three-month sentence, stated:

“It’s incredibly hard for me to see my little son, who has just begun to speak, asking me where his dad is. I am emotionally exhausted from the constant participation in court hearings related to the criminal cases of my father [Sergey Afanasiyev], husband, and my own case”



Yekaterina Olshevskaya



Anton Olshevskiy



Sergey Afanasiyev



In Favor of Jehovah's Witnesses European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

Taganrog LRO and Others v. Russia – June 7, 2022

The Court concluded that the beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses are legal and protected by the rights to freedom of religion, expression, and association. Russia was ordered to return all confiscated properties or to pay **EUR 59,617,458 (USD 63,684,978)** in pecuniary damages.

Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow and Others v. Russia – June 10, 2010

The ECHR ruled that the liquidation of the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow and the refusal to re-register that organization violated the right to freedom of religion and the right to freedom of association guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. The ECHR also ruled that the court proceedings in Russia violated the right to a fair trial.

Polyakovy v. Russia – July 18, 2024

The ECHR ruled that Russia's domestic legal system did not afford adequate legal protection against possible abuses in the field of geographical distribution of prisoners and the applicants were deprived of the minimum degree of protection entitled in a democratic society.

Lubin and Others v. Russia – March 6, 2025

The ECHR ruled that Russia violated the rights of two disabled men in pre-trial detention by failing to provide adequate living conditions and support, amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment.

Loginov and Others – March 6, 2025

The ECHR ruled that Russia violated the individual's human rights due to an excessive length pre-trial detention.

Mandrichenko v. Russia – March 6, 2025

The ECHR ruled that Mr. Mandrichenko's rights were violated for arresting him while preaching in the street, an activity he performed prior to the ban.

Vladimirov v. Russia – March 6, 2025

The ECHR ruled Russia violated Mr Vladimirov's human rights by refusing alternative civilian service by the draft commission without being given an opportunity to present his beliefs, and solely on the grounds of his religious affiliation.

Notable decisions by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (CCPR) in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses against Russia

Kalin et al v. Russia, communication No. 2935/2017, Views of 24 October 2024

The Committee determined that the actions taken by Russian authorities, including raids, arrests, and the confiscation of religious literature, were unlawful and constituted a breach of the applicants' rights to freedom of religion and expression.

Pavlenko et al v. Russia, communication No. 2765/2016, Views of 24 October 2023

The Committee determined that the dissolution of the local religious organization and the persecution of its members, including the distribution of religious literature deemed extremist by Russian authorities, were unlawful.

Yurlov et al v. Russia, communication No. 2925/2017, Views of 24 October 2023

The Committee determined that the dissolution of the local religious organization and the persecution of its members, including the distribution of religious literature deemed extremist by Russian authorities, were unlawful.

RUSSIA:

Religious Freedom Objectives of Jehovah's Witnesses

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THE GOVERNMENT OF RUSSIA TO:

- Meet with a delegation of Jehovah's Witnesses in an effort to resolve the current situation
- In line with the European Court ruling, annul the April 2017 Supreme Court decision that banned and liquidated the legal entities of the Witnesses
- Release all Witnesses who are in prison and penal colonies
- Exonerate those who have been unjustly convicted and given suspended sentences
- Remove the names of all Witnesses who appear on the Federal list of extremists (Rosfinmonitoring)
- Remove the Witnesses' religious literature, including the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (the Holy Bible), from the Federal List of Extremist Materials
- Return all confiscated property owned or used by the Witnesses
- Abide by Russia's Constitution and respect international law, including the binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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