

2013-04-29

Fråga-svar

Ryssland. Jehovas Vittnen

Fråga

Inkom 2013-04-02

Finns något färskare information än UD rapporten som finns i LIFOs från 2010? Av den framgår att Jehovas vittnen är förbjudna i Moskva och att Europadomstolen dömde Ryssland den 10 juni 2010 för att ha kränkt rätten till religionsfrihet.

Svar

Det finns omfattande rapportering från den norska organisationen Forum 18 beträffande situationen för Jehovas Vittnen i Ryssland. Nedan redovisas några av de senaste rapporterna.

Forum 18, *Russia: Is "negative evaluation of Christianity" a crime?*, 2013-03-27:

"Four Jehovah's Witness publications have been ruled "extremist" by a Siberian court since the beginning of 2013, with rulings expected soon on a further four, Forum 18 News Service notes. One "expert" analysis used by the court uncovered "propaganda" of the superiority of citizens on religious grounds and incitement of religious discord. It also pointed to the publication's "negative evaluations of Christianity and its religious leaders", but gave no examples from the text itself. The publications are expected to appear soon on Russia's Federal List of Extremist Materials. In April a court in Chelyabinsk is due to consider whether 95 further Jehovah's Witness works are "extremist". Fifteen more works by Islamic theologian Said Nursi and a Russian translation of a biography of him were added to the Federal List on

19 March. Individuals and communities who possess such works deemed "extremist" can be fined or even imprisoned."

Forum 18, *Russia: Familiar twist in anti-Jehovah's Witness campaign*, 2013-03-21:

"Russian officials are reviving old tactics in their long-running campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses, Forum 18 News Service has learned. A prosecutor in the Siberian city of Tobolsk opened a criminal case against local Jehovah's Witnesses alleging they "called upon citizens to refuse to perform their civic duties" and "motivated citizens to refuse vital medical treatment". The maximum punishment they might face if the case reaches court is four years' imprisonment. The prosecutor refused to discuss the case with Forum 18. Police and FSB security service officers raided six Jehovah's Witness homes in Tobolsk and that of another local resident, seizing religious literature and other items. In December 2012 a court in Kemerovo refused a prosecutor's request to ban the local Jehovah's Witness community on similar grounds. Officials have failed to respond to Forum 18's repeated attempts to find out why Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims who read Islamic theologian Said Nursi's works are targeted."

Forum 18, *Russia: Is anti-Jehovah's Witness campaign slowing?*, 2013-01-02:

"Russia's efforts to convict Jehovah's Witnesses for criminal "extremism" appear to be weakening, Forum 18 News Service notes. "But we can't say the authorities have become more relaxed in principle," Jehovah's Witness spokesperson Grigory Martynov he remarked to Forum 18 in Moscow. "It's not clear how they will react next, what other methods they will seek." Incidents of police harassment against Jehovah's Witnesses are also reducing. Martynov's continued concern stems primarily from a criminal case against 16 Jehovah's Witnesses in the southern Russian town of Taganrog. Forum 18 notes that local prosecutors have so far found it easier to convict Muslim readers of Said Nursi's works than Jehovah's Witnesses because they are deemed to belong to a banned "extremist" organisation. Even with Nursi readers - although one trial and several other criminal investigations continue - no "extremism" criminal convictions have been handed down since October 2011."

"Incidents of police harassment against Jehovah's Witnesses are also reducing"

"Officials and individuals who oppose Jehovah's Witnesses as a "totalitarian sect" categorise many Baptists, Pentecostals, Hare Krishna devotees and Mormons in the same way. But efforts at restricting such faiths using the 2002 Extremism Law have so far

centred on Jehovah's Witnesses. This is partly due to their public visibility but also their isolation from other religious communities, Forum 18 notes; a simultaneous attack against numerous disfavoured faiths would be likely to result in more protests against these religious freedom violations."

"According to a September 2012 Jehovah's Witness report on the case, several of the accused are second-, third- and even fourth-generation Jehovah's Witnesses."

Även enligt nedanstående källor fortsätter myndigheter att trakassera icke traditionella grupper, såsom Jehovas vittnen.

Caucasian Knot, *Taganrog: case of 16 Jehovah's Witnesses sent to court*, 2013-04-17:

"The indictment against 16 members of the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, accused of extremism, has been sent to the court. Alyona Borodina, one of the advocates, told the "Caucasian Knot" correspondent about it."

Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2013 - Russia*, 2013-02-01:

"Freedom of religion is respected unevenly. A 1997 law on religion gives the state extensive control and makes it difficult for new or independent groups to operate. Orthodox Christianity has a privileged position, and in 2009 the president authorized religious instruction in the public schools. Regional authorities continue to harass nontraditional groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. While Russia has long struggled with anti-Semitism, Putin supported the creation of a \$50 million Jewish museum that opened in Moscow in late 2012."

Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2012 - The State of the World's Human Rights*, 2012-05-24:

"Anti-extremism legislation was often used arbitrarily to clamp down on those critical of the authorities. In response, the Supreme Court issued a ruling in June clarifying that criticism of government officials or politicians did not constitute incitement to hatred under anti-extremism legislation. Religious minorities such as non-traditional Muslim groups or Jehovah's Witnesses continued to face persecution. ..."

"In December, Aleksandr Kalistratov, a Jehovah's Witness, was acquitted by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Altai of inciting hatred against other religious groups. He had been fined in October by a lower court for distributing leaflets about Jehovah's Witnesses"

US Department of State, *July-December 2010 International Religious Freedom Report*, 2011-09-13:

"The constitution protects religious freedom, but other laws and policies restrict religious freedom. In practice, the government enforced these restrictions. Religious minorities, in particular Muslim followers of Turkish theologian Said Nursi's work, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Scientologists, faced bans on their religious literature and difficulties registering their legal entities. Although the constitution provides for the equality of all religious groups before the law and the separation of church and state, the government did not always respect these provisions"

"Jehovah's Witnesses reported that several attempts to hold annual conventions in Nezlobnaya (Stavropol), Bratsk (Irkutsk), and Tula (Tula) with thousands of their members in attendance were interrupted, delayed, or cancelled due to interference from government authorities. In Nezlobnaya, after 2,000 Jehovah's Witnesses arrived to participate in a three-day convention, police blocked the main entrance of the convention site for five hours, did not permit the Jehovah's Witnesses to use microphones once admitted, and later broke up the meeting after the electricity to the building was cut. The next day, the site was ringed with garbage trucks and police, which prevented the Jehovah's Witnesses from entering. Police then allegedly found a suspicious package and ordered everyone to evacuate the area. When the Jehovah's Witnesses moved to a nearby town, the same officials arrived and stopped the program, detained the group's leader, and fined him 1,000 rubles (\$33) for holding a religious meeting without informing the authorities. In contrast, the Jehovah's Witnesses convention in Voronezh faced none of these restrictions. Jehovah's Witnesses also reported that they were frequently unable to rent stadiums or other large venues due to alleged government pressure on the management of those facilities."

Jamestown Foundation, *Insurgency-related Violence Reported in Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan*, 2011-04-29:

"On April 27, an unidentified attacker threw a hand grenade into the courtyard of a Jehovah's Witness meeting hall in the town of Nartkala, Kabardino-Balkaria. The grenade did not detonate but was later destroyed in a controlled explosion. No one was hurt in the incident (www.kavkaz-uzel.ru, April 28).

In a separate incident that day, an improvised explosive device was discovered in Nalchik. The IED, which included a timing mechanism set to go off at midday, was defused five minutes before noon (www.kavkaz-uzel.ru, April 27)."

Denna sammanställning av information/länkar är baserad på informationssökningar gjorda under en begränsad tid. Den är sammanställd utifrån noggrant utvalda och allmänt tillgängliga informationskällor. Alla använda källor refereras. All information som presenteras, med undantag av obestridda/uppenbara fakta, har dubbelkontrollerats om inget annat anges. Sammanställningen gör inte anspråk på att vara uttömmande och bör inte tillmätas exklusivt bevisvärde i samband med avgörandet av ett enskilt ärende. Informationen i sammanställningen återspeglar inte nödvändigtvis Migrationsverkets officiella ståndpunkt i en viss fråga och det finns ingen avsikt att genom sammanställningen göra politiska ställningstaganden. Refererade dokument bör läsas i sitt sammanhang.

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