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Official Russian Satanist Church Declares Opposition to Religious Extremism

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A Satanic religious group has been operating in Russia as an officially recognized church for the past year, according to the news website 66.ru. What's more, the Satanists are using their one-year anniversary to declare opposition to religious extremism.

The Satanic Church of Russia received legal recognition on May 10, 2016 — a date they subsequently declared "the day of Russian Satanism," 66.ru reported.

In an interview with the news site, church leader Oleg Sataninsky expressed his organization's support for the controversial Yarovaya Laws, which widen the Russian legal concept of extremism and place restrictions on missionary work. Last month, Russia banned the Jehovah's Witnesses religious group under the legislation.

"We consider it necessary to speak out against missionary activity" Sataninsky said. "The

Jehovah's Witnesses had an extreme approach. We oppose indoctrination and religious propaganda."

The Satanic Church of Russia has existed since 2013, but decided last year to register as a religious association, "rather than risk being labelled a totalitarian sect and banned by the state," Sataninsky said.

The group insists it does not follow the standard clichés associated with Satanism: sacrificial animal slaughter and black magic rituals. Sataninsky also argues that Satanism is not devil-worship. Devil-worshippers, he said, "are a form of anti-Christians," while Satanists follow Anton Sandor's 1969 "Satanic Bible."

At press time, The Moscow Times could not confirm whether Sataninsky was the Satanic Church leader's true surname.

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