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Jehovah's Witnesses Added to Russia's Extremism Registry

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Russia's Justice Ministry on Thursday added the Jehovah's Witnesses to a registry of banned organizations after the group was labeled extremist by the country's Supreme Court.

Any activities by the Jehovah's Witnesses Administrative Center in Russia as well as 395 local branches are now banned, in a move that puts the Jehovah's Witnesses on a par with groups like Islamic State, another organization banned in Russia.

Russian state media reported news of the group's inclusion on the registry by referring to the Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist group," likely to comply with Russian extremism laws.

Related article: U.S. Religious Freedom Report Names Russia 'Country of Concern'

A U.S. State Department report released this week labeled Russia "a country of concern" for religious minorities such as the Jehovah's Witnesses.

It said the group's "right to religious freedom is being eliminated thoroughly, and yet 'legally' under Russian law."

Russia's Supreme Court in July rejected an appeal to lift the ban.

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