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Russian Priest Sentenced to 17 Years Over Sexual Abuse of Children

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TASS

An Orthodox priest in Far East Russia has reportedly been sentenced to 17 years in maximum-security prison for sexual violence against children.

Hieromonk Meletyi, whose secular name is Andrei Tkachenko, was detained in the republic of Sakha in June 2017 on suspicion of committing acts of sexual violence against two minors. Later news reports cited investigators alleging the defrocked priest had abused 87 children under the age of 14.

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A district court convicted Tkachenko on Wednesday and sentenced him to 17 years in maximum-security prison, Interfax reported Thursday, citing an unnamed source.

The court also reportedly awarded the victims compensation for moral damage and ordered the priest to seek psychiatric treatment.

It was not immediately clear from the reports if Tkachenko was found guilty of all 87 counts of abuse or the initial two.

The regional Orthodox Church diocese, the Sakha Eparchy, announced plans "to raise the issue of ousting the cleric after the decisions over appeals was made in higher courts." Tkachenko had been suspended from the church after his detention.

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