

7 Jehovah's Witnesses Brutally Tortured in Russia, Spokesman Says

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Alexander Demyanchuk / TASS

A spokesman for the Jehovah's Witnesses has said that Russian investigators have brutally tortured adherents of the group who are currently held in detention.

Russia's Supreme Court declared the Jehovah's Witnesses an extremist organization in 2017, leading to mass raids and causing hundreds of its estimated 175,000 members to flee the country. Earlier this month, a court in the city of Oryol convicted Dennis Christensen, a Danish Jehovah's Witness, of extremism and [sentenced](#) him to six years behind bars, in a case that rights groups [warned](#) may trigger a crackdown on religious minorities.

Related article: [Russian Court Convicts Danish Jehovah's Witness to 6 Years for 'Extremism'](#)

A spokesperson for the Jehovah's Witnesses said Tuesday that investigators in the Siberian city of Surgut had stripped, suffocated, doused with water and applied stun guns on "at least seven" believers [detained](#) on extremism charges, days after criminal cases were reportedly

initiated against 19 Jehovah's Witnesses following mass raids.

“The agents stripped the men naked, put a bag over each suspect’s head and wrapped it with tape. Agents then tied each suspect’s hands behind his back, smashed his fingers, and beat him on his neck, feet and kidney,” Jarrod Lopes, a spokesman for Jehovah’s Witnesses at their world headquarters in New York, told The Moscow Times by email Tuesday.

Lopes said members of the Investigative Committee in Surgut “poured water over the men, shocked them with a stun gun in the anus area—gradually increasing the strength of the shock.”

The victims were reportedly asked to disclose information about their meetings and leadership during the interrogation.

A Surgut court placed three of the alleged victims of torture in custody pending trial for two months, with an estimated 250 local Jehovah’s Witnesses members in the [crosshairs](#) of the authorities.

European Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses representative Yaroslav Sivulsky called the alleged tortures “a desperate and unconscionable attempt by Russian law enforcement to manufacture evidence of alleged criminal activities.”

Related article: [Activists Compare Russia’s Alleged Torture of Jehovah’s Witnesses to Nazi Germany](#)

Update: Russia's Investigative Committee has denied the claims, saying that investigators did not apply any physical or psychological pressure on the detainees and had acted in accordance with the law.

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