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FSB Raids Jehovah's Witnesses Meeting Spots in Siberia

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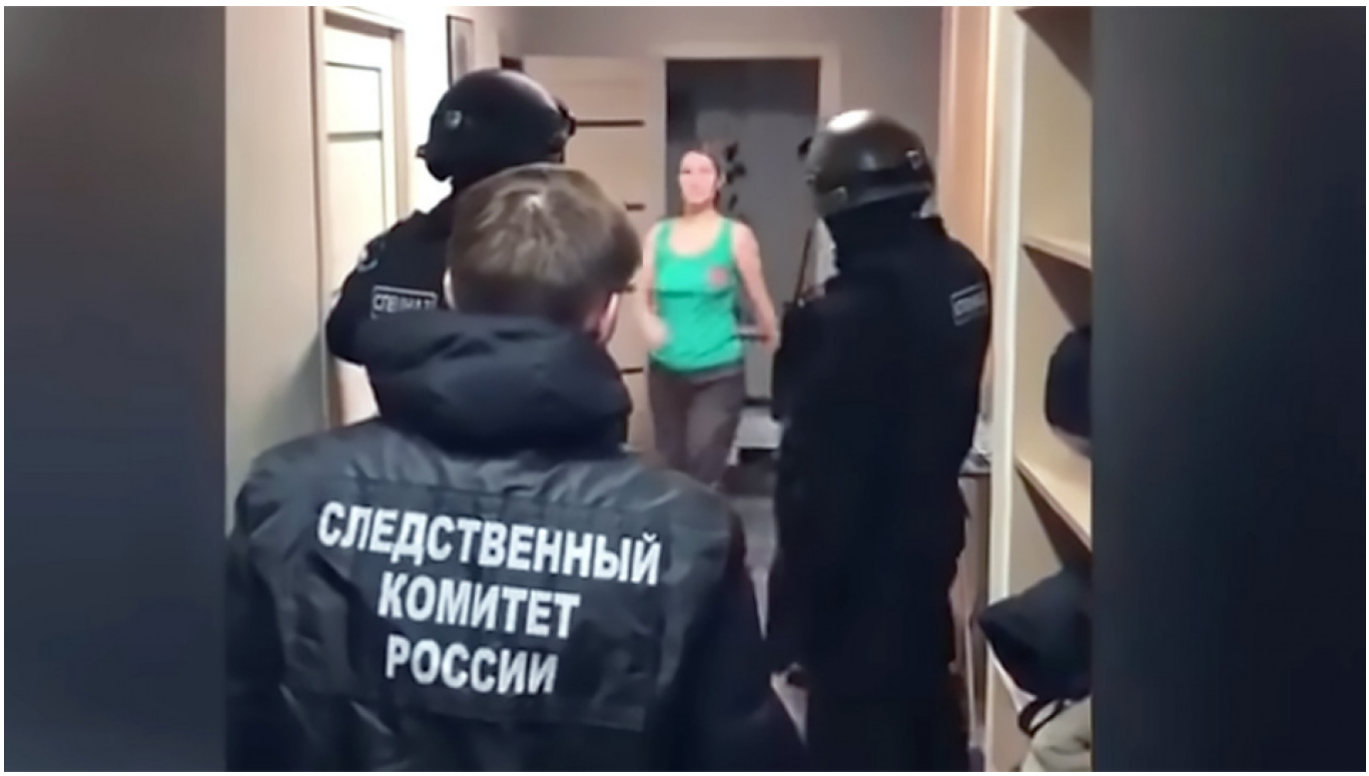

jw-russia.org

Russian authorities raided the meeting spaces of Jehovah's Witnesses in Siberia and the country's Far East late last week, detaining five worshippers and holding two in pre-trial detention.

Russia added the group to its registry of extremist organizations in 2017, exposing Russia's estimated 175,000 Jehovah's Witnesses to mass raids and forcing at least 5,000 to flee the country.

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Federal Security Service (FSB) officers and investigators raided at least 15 homes in Novosibirsk, Primorye region and Krasnoyarsk region, the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia organization said in a statement on Monday.

Five worshippers were detained, with two of them still held in pre-trial detention.

The Krasnoyarsk region's Investigative Committee said it petitioned for the arrest of an unnamed 28-year-old leader of the religious group on extremism charges. In Primorye region, a woman was taken into custody and a man was placed under house arrest on the same charges, investigators said.

The organization's website says 141 Russian Jehovah's Witnesses are under investigation on extremism charges, including 20 held in pre-trial detention or jailed. They include Danish citizen Dennis Christensen, who was sentenced to six years behind bars in February 2019, and Polish citizen Andrzej Oniszczuk, who has reportedly been abused while awaiting trial since October 2018.

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