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Dane Jailed by Russia in Jehovah's Witnesses Crackdown Loses Appeal — Spokesman

By Reuters

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Dennis Christensen in court **Courtesy of Jehovah's Witnesses**

A Danish adherent of the Jehovah's Witnesses jailed for six years in Russia after being found guilty of organizing a banned extremist group lost his court appeal on Thursday, a spokesman for the group said.

Armed police detained Dennis Christensen, a builder, in May 2017 at a prayer meeting in Oryol, some 200 miles (320 kilometers) south of Moscow after a court in the region outlawed the local Jehovah's Witnesses a year earlier.

Related article: Russian Court Convicts Danish Jehovah's Witness to 6 Years for 'Extremism'

A Russian court in February jailed him for six years in a case critics condemn as crushing

religious freedom.

On Thursday, a court in Oryol ruled on his appeal.

"The three-judge panel denied the appeal and upheld the six-year sentence he received in February," Jehovah's Witnesses spokesman Jarrod Lopes said in a statement.

Lopes said 197 Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia were facing criminal charges, and that 28 men and women among them were being held in pre-trial detention and 24 were under house arrest.

Amnesty International condemned the ruling in a statement Thursday and called for Christensen's immediate release.

"The authorities missed an opportunity to overturn the grim injustice done to Dennis Christensen, who was thrown behind bars solely for exercising his right to freedom of religion and peacefully held belief," Natalia Prilutskaya, Amnesty International’s Russia researcher, wrote.

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