

Russian Jehovah's Witness Gets Suspended Sentence for 'Extremist Activity'

By [Reuters](#)

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Orthodox scholars have cast Jehovah's Witnesses as a dangerous foreign sect that erodes state institutions and traditional values. jw-russia.org

A court in the Russian Far East on Tuesday handed a six-year suspended jail sentence to a Jehovah's Witness, Grigoriy Bubnov, after finding him guilty of extremist activity, a spokesman for the religious group said.

Jehovah's Witnesses have been under pressure for years in Russia, where the dominant Orthodox Church is championed by President Vladimir Putin. Orthodox scholars have cast them as a dangerous foreign sect that erodes state institutions and traditional values, allegations they reject.

Russia's Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that the group was an "extremist" organization and

ordered it to disband, a decision that was followed by a crackdown which has seen dozens of adherents detained and hundreds hit with criminal charges.

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Prosecutors had asked the court to sentence Bubnov, 54, to seven years in prison, accusing him of organizing the activities of the local Jehovah's Witnesses, something he denied.

Jarrod Lopes, a spokesman for the group, said on Tuesday the court had opted for a suspended six-year jail sentence instead. He said Bubnov would look into appealing. The court could not immediately be reached for comment.

Although Bubnov escaped a custodial sentence, Lopes said being convicted as an 'extremist' could restrict a person's finances and adversely affect his or her employment options.

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