

'Extremist' Jehovah's Witness Jailed in Crimea

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Russia declared the Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist" organization in 2017. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

A court in annexed Crimea sentenced a Jehovah's Witness to six years in prison on charges of extremism Thursday in the ongoing crackdown on the religious group in Russia.

Sergei Filatov, the local branch leader, was among several worshippers swept up in raids in the Crimean town of Dzhankoy in 2018. Russia, which seized the Black Sea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, declared the Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist" organization in 2017.

The Moscow-administered court found Filatov guilty of continuing the activities of the Jehovah's Witness branch despite its ban, the Dzhankoy District Court [said](#) in a statement.

Related article: [Russian Jehovah's Witness Gets Suspended Sentence for 'Extremist Activity'](#)

Prosecutors had requested a seven-year sentence for Filatov.

Filatov did not admit his guilt and had sought a not guilty verdict.

“The case abounds with falsifications, the verdict is based on a single home worship incident and will be appealed,” the U.S.-based Jehovah’s Witness organization [said](#) in a statement.

A different Crimean court [handed](#) another Jehovah’s Witness a 400,000-ruble (\$6,400) fine Thursday for proselytizing in spite of a countrywide ban on the religious group. Prosecutors had requested a prison sentence of six and a half years for Artyom Gerasimov.

Human rights activists have criticized the ban on the Jehovah’s Witness religious group by Russia’s Supreme Court, which has led to mass raids and prosecutions of worshippers. President Vladimir Putin has called the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ extremist label “complete nonsense.”

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