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Raids Target Dozens of Jehovah's Families in Single Russian Region

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Russia outlawed the Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist" organization in April 2017. **Moskva News Agency**

Russian authorities said they've carried out more than 100 raids in the homes of dozens of Jehovah's Witnesses in a region that borders Ukraine.

The joint searches by investigators, police and National Guard troops led to two criminal cases being opened against 10 worshippers aged between 24-56, investigators in the Voronezh region south of Moscow said in a statement Monday.

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They face up to 10 years in prison on charges of organizing an extremist community for holding religious meetings, preaching and recruiting new members between mid-2018 and early 2020.

“Not wanting to be exposed by law enforcement, the suspects used measures of secrecy including storing electronic documentation and using video conferencing,” the regional Investigative Committee branch said.

The investigators boasted of the 110 raids as the Jehovah’s Witness branch in Russia said its members have experienced more than 1,000 home invasions since the country outlawed the group as an “extremist” organization in April 2017.

“The security forces’ special operations are staggering in their cruelty,” the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia said Tuesday.

“Masked armed groups break down doors and windows, barging into [the homes of] harmless people. Not only men, but also young children, vulnerable women, the elderly and the disabled often fall victim to grueling and long searches.”

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