

Russian Jehovah's Witnesses Targeted in Fresh Raids

November 24, 2020

The  Moscow Times

Russian authorities have arrested Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow and across 20 other regions as part of their latest investigation into the religious group that is officially banned as "extremist," investigators [said](#) Tuesday.

Video released by the Moscow branch of the federal Investigative Committee, which investigates major crimes, showed masked men prying open an apartment door and displaying Russian and foreign currency seized during the searches. In a statement, it said Jehovah's Witnesses held "secret meetings" there, "studied religious literature" and "recruited new members."

Embed:

В 20 регионах России прошли обыски у организаторов и участников движения «Свидетели Иеговы» (запрещено в России).

Полиция задержала несколько человек. На них завели уголовное дело по статье об организации деятельности экстремистской организации pic.twitter.com/pX9UBNCWji

— HTB (@ntvru) [November 24, 2020](#)

The raids were part of a criminal case opened into “extremist” activities of the Jehovah’s Witnesses Administrative Center, the organization’s head office, between June 2019 and the present.

Russia’s Supreme Court banned the Jehovah’s Witnesses in April 2017.

“Together with the Russian Interior Ministry, the FSB [Federal Security Service] and National Guard support, investigators of the capital’s main directorate conducted searches in Moscow and in more than 20 regions of the country,” the Moscow Investigative Committee said.

It did not say in which regions and how many worshippers have been detained, noting only that they were both “organizers and participants of the movement.”

If found guilty, the defendants face up to 10 years in prison.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia organization has not reported on the latest raids.

The Christian denomination estimated that more than 400 of its followers have been charged or convicted in Russia between 2017 and late October 2020. Ten worshippers are serving prison sentences ranging from two to six years.

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