

Siberian Jehovah's Witnesses Jailed for 'Extremism'

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Russia's Supreme Court banned the Jehovah's Witnesses as an "extremist" organization in April 2017.
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Four Jehovah's Witnesses have been convicted and sentenced on extremism charges in southwestern Siberia, the religious organization banned in Russia [said](#) Monday.

A court in the city of Omsk found husband and wife Sergei and Anastasia Polyakov guilty of recruiting others to join an "extremist" group. Two other Jehovah's Witnesses, Dinara Dyusekeyeva and Gaukhar Bektemirova, were found guilty of participating in the activities of an extremist group.

Related article: [Over 400 Jehovah's Witnesses Charged or Convicted in Russia, Group Says](#)

The court sentenced Polyakov to three years in prison and handed a two-year suspended sentence to each of the three other believers.

All four pleaded not guilty.

Their lawyer Dmitry Kolobov [told](#) the U.S.-funded RFE/RL news organization that the defense will appeal the ruling.

Polyakov is expected to be the 11th Jehovah's Witness to serve a prison sentence after Russia's Supreme Court banned the Jehovah's Witnesses in April 2017. The Christian denomination estimated that more than 400 of its followers have been charged or convicted in Russia between 2017 and late October 2020.

The Polyakovs, St. Petersburg natives, were arrested in 2018 on suspicion of moving to Omsk some 2,200 kilometers east of Moscow to recruit believers, Russian investigators who also reported on the court ruling [said](#). Dyusekeyeva and Bektemirova were detained the following year.

"Anastasia was the [first woman](#) Jehovah's Witness in the history of modern Russia to be imprisoned for her faith," the organization said in a statement on its website.

In her last word, Dyusekeyeva said: "Neither I nor my friends have committed any crime."

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