The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Jehovah's Witness Handed Longest 'Extremism' Prison Sentence

February 12, 2021



Alexander Ivshin, 63, was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for activities including hosting Bible discussions via video link. **Jehovah's Witnesses Russia**

A court in southern Russia has handed the country's longest prison sentence yet to an elderly Jehovah's Witness leader for organizing an "extremist" group, the religious organization said Wednesday.

Authorities accused Alexander Ivshin, 63, of organizing the activities of a banned organization, including hosting Bible discussions with friends via video link, until his April 2020 detention as part of mass raids in the Krasnodar region. Russia outlawed the Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremists" in 2017.

Related article: Over 400 Jehovah's Witnesses Charged or Convicted in Russia, Group Says

The Abinsk District Court in the Krasnodar region found Ivshin guilty and sentenced him to 7 years and 6 months in a prison colony.

The state prosecutor had sought an eight-year prison sentence for Ivshin.

“The imposed punishment is the harshest of all sentences imposed on Jehovah's Witnesses,” the organization said in an emailed statement.

Ivshin is now the 11th worshipper to receive real prison time in Russia on extremism charges, with sentences ranging from two to six years, according to the Jehovah’s Witnesses website.

Ivshin maintained in his last word that he is “not being tried for extremism, but for simply continuing to practice the peaceful religion of Jehovah’s Witnesses,” according to the organization.

“My life position is based on biblical principles where there is no extremism or violence,” Ivshin said.

On Thursday, the U.S. State Department condemned Russia’s ongoing crackdown on Jehovah’s Witnesses “in the strongest possible terms.”

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/02/12/russian-jehovahs-witness-handed-longest-extremism-prison-sentence-a72916