

Russia Hands Jehovah's Witness Follower 7-Year Jail Term for 'Extremism'

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Yevgeny Bushev. jw-russia.org

A court in Russia's Chelyabinsk region has sentenced a Jehovah's Witness follower to seven years in prison on charges of "extremism," the religious organization's Russian branch [said](#) Tuesday.

Yevgeny Bushev had been under house arrest since September 2022 on allegations of "organizing actions to continue the illegal activities of a banned religious organization," the religious group said on its website.

Russia's Supreme Court in 2017 declared the Jehovah's Witness movement to be "extremist," banning its estimated 400 branches across the country.

Chelyabinsk's Kalininsky District Court found Bushev [guilty](#) and handed him a seven-year prison sentence.

Prosecutors had requested a six-year prison sentence for the worshiper.

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The Jehovah's Witness movement's Russian branch said Bushev was arrested due to his participation in meetings and discussions with local worshippers.

The independent news website Mediazona [reported](#) that the prosecution's witness was an employee of Russia's National Guard (Rosgvardia) who had "shown interest in the Bible" during conversations with Bushev and other worshippers.

A linguistic examination concluded that Bushev had "tempted" the Rosgvardia employee to accept the Jehovah's Witness faith when responding to questions about religion.

The banned religious group said that Bushev is the 15th Jehovah's Witness follower from the Chelyabinsk region to be prosecuted for "extremism."

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) [said](#) in June 2022 that Russia had violated over 1,400 followers' right to religious freedom when it declared the Christian organization an "extremist" group.

International human rights NGOs have condemned Russia's crackdown on Jehovah's Witness followers in the years since the ban.

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