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## RUSSIA: Raids, investigations, torture

By Victoria Arnold, Forum 18 (<https://www.forum18.org>)

*Regional Investigative Committee branches, the FSB security service, and armed police have carried out at least 86 house searches between late October and mid-December alone across 16 regions of Russia as investigations and criminal prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses continue. Some raids involve violence. Three Muslims who met with others to study Islam with the writings of Said Nursi are known to be under criminal investigation in Tatarstan and Dagestan.*

Raids on Jehovah's Witness homes in Russia and subsequent prosecutions for alleged extremism-related offences are showing no signs of stopping, nearly three years after the first criminal cases were opened in January 2018. Regional Investigative Committee branches, the FSB security service, and armed police have carried out at least 86 house searches between late October and mid-December alone across 16 regions of Russia, and are thought to have instigated 13 criminal cases against at least 26 people.

The raids continue as two more Jehovah's Witnesses were convicted on "extremism" charges in mid-December. A Novosibirsk court jailed Yury Savelyov for six years on 16 December, while the following day a Rostov court gave Ruslan Alyyev a suspended sentence of two years and six months (see below).

In total, more than 400 Jehovah's Witnesses remain under investigation, are on trial, or have been convicted since the Supreme Court ordered the liquidation of their Administrative Centre as an "extremist organisation" in 2017 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2297](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2297)) and banned its activities nationwide. Well over half of Russia's 83 federal subjects have now seen raids and arrests.

Two Muslims who met with others to study Islam with the writings of the late Turkish theologian Said Nursi are currently known to be under investigation in Tatarstan and Dagestan for alleged involvement in "Nurdzhular". The criminal case against a third, 62-year-old Nakiya Sharifullina from Naberezhnyye Chelny (Tatarstan Republic), has already been handed to court. It is unknown when these three cases may come to trial (see below).

"Nurdzhular" is a Russification of the Turkish phrase "Nursi followers". Muslims in Russia deny any such formal organisation exists, but the Supreme Court banned it as "extremist" in 2008 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)). Typically, Muslims accused by the authorities of involvement in "Nurdzhular" meet in homes to study Islam, with one or more expounding on Nursi's works. They also pray, eat, and drink tea together, and do not seek state permission to meet.

Many Jehovah's Witnesses and a Muslim who reads the works of Said Nursi have suffered torture, either during arrest and interrogation, or upon arrival at a prison camp after they are convicted and their sentences come into force. Contrary to Russia's obligations under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, no investigator or prison official is yet known to have been arrested or put on criminal trial for committing or allowing torture ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)). Several raids on Jehovah's Witness homes in Moscow on 24 November also involved torture.

Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims who read Nursi's works may face prosecution under the same Criminal Code Articles ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2619](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2619)) – Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity") and Article 282.2, Part 2 ("Participation in the activities of a banned extremist organisation").

Some Jehovah's Witnesses have also been charged under Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing extremist activity") and Article 282.2, Part 1.1 ("Inclination, recruitment, or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation").

Investigations, interrogations, courts, sentences

Investigations usually begin with late-night or early-morning raids by the FSB security service, the Investigative Committee, or both, accompanied by armed and masked officers of the National Guard or police

([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2394](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2394)). After searching properties and confiscating electronic devices and personal items such as bank cards, religious literature, and photographs, investigators then take some people away for questioning. This can often continue all night.

After their initial interrogation, individuals are either released (often under travel restrictions) or sent to temporary detention centres while investigators apply to courts to have them placed under house arrest or in pre-trial detention ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2394](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2394)). This can be for an initial period of two months, which may be subsequently renewed. People may also be summoned for questioning as suspects or witnesses without unannounced raids on their homes.

Prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses have so far almost invariably reached court, with only two cases known to have been closed at the investigation stage (see below). Investigations may take many months, even years, with some individuals spending long periods in detention or under house arrest.

Eight Jehovah's Witnesses and one Muslim Nursi reader are serving labour camp terms as "extremists" ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2619](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2619)). Of 27 Jehovah's Witnesses convicted of "extremism" charges since late July 2020, eight were given jail terms and 17 suspended sentences, while two were fined ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2620](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2620)).

On 30 November, Pervomaysky District Court in Omsk handed Gaukhar Magainovna Bekhtemirova, Dinara Khayrollayevna Dyusekeyeva, and Anastasiya Andreyevna Polyakova two-year suspended sentences under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)) ("Participation in the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

Polyakova's husband, Sergey Valeryevich Polyakov, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)) ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity"), and Criminal Code 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing extremist activity").

Mid-December saw two more convictions of Jehovah's Witnesses:

- on 16 December, Novosibirsk's Lenin District Court sentenced Yury Prokopyevich Savelyov (born 1 January 1954) to six years' imprisonment ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)). He is the oldest Jehovah's Witness to receive a prison term. Prosecutors in his case had requested the longest prison sentence yet for a Jehovah's Witness – eight years. Savelyov has already spent more than two years in detention;

- on 17 December at Lenin District Court in Rostov-on-Don, Ruslan Ramizovich Alyyev (born 21 June 1987) received a suspended sentence of two years and six months, with a probationary period of the same length, during which he will be obliged to report to probation authorities once a month.

Naberezhnyye Chelny: Two under travel restrictions

Two Muslim women from the town of Naberezhnyye Chelny (Tatarstan Republic) are now facing prosecution for meeting to study the writings of Said Nursi. The Tatarstan Republic Investigative Committee and other agencies interpret this as "continuing the activities" of the outlawed "extremist organisation" "Nurdzhular". Investigators have lodged one case at Naberezhnyye Chelny City Court, but it is still unknown when either trial might begin.

Investigators opened a criminal case against Nakiya Khametzakirovna Sharifullina (born 1 January 1958) under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity") on 24 March 2020, and charged her some time between 9 April and 18 May. Based on court records, Sharifullina appears to have been under house arrest for a total of eight months, and was released in late November. On 18 December, Tatarstan Republic Investigative Committee announced that it had completed its investigation and sent Sharifullina's case to court. It added that she had been placed under travel restrictions and a good behaviour agreement.

On 11 June, investigators had Sharifullina added to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists" ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)). Banks are obliged to freeze the assets of people on this list, although small transactions (up to 10,000 Roubles) are permitted.

According to court documents seen by Forum 18, while she was under house arrest, Sharifullina was not allowed to leave her flat except: to go for a daily walk; to seek necessary medical treatment; and to participate in the criminal case as required by investigators. She was not able to send or receive post, use the telephone or the internet, and otherwise contact anyone except for her

lawyer, the probation authorities, investigators, the prosecutor's office, the court, or emergency services. Any meetings with her lawyer had to take place at her home.

Nursayma Zaynullovna Khadiullina is also under investigation under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2. Investigators have placed her under travel restrictions, but she does not appear on the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists".

Sharifullina and Khadiullina were among 20 Muslims whose homes in Naberezhnyye Chelny were raided by police and officials from other agencies in late March 2020 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2563](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2563)). According to court documents seen by Forum 18, Naberezhnyye Chelny City Court authorised the search of Sharifullina's flat on 25 March, on the grounds that it could contain "objects, documents, devices, and literature of an extremist character, of significance for the criminal case". Another woman, Alsu Mintalibovna Khusayenova, suffered a heart attack during the search of her home. No criminal case has been opened against her or any of the other people initially subjected to house searches.

The defendants and their lawyers began familiarising themselves with the case materials "some time ago", a fellow Muslim who has been following the case told Forum 18, but "there has been no further movement [by investigators]. Nobody has been summoned, nothing has been said." They added that "[The investigators] themselves probably understand that there is no evidence of a crime. They're thinking what to do next."

Sharifullina and Khadiullina stand accused of organising and participating in a "women's cell" of "Nurdzhular", which met in several flats in Naberezhnyye Chelny in order to study the Koran and the Turkish language, as well as Nursi's "Risale-i Nur" (Messages of Light) collection, his "Letters", and "A way to positive service". All of these works by Nursi are on the Justice Ministry's Federal List of Extremist Materials ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)).

In 2005, both Khadiullina and Sharifullina were part of a woman's study group raided by police with a helicopter ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=992](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=992)). Asked by Forum 18 why sweeping searches, involving the FSB security service, had been conducted at the group's meeting places, Valery Kuzmin of Tatarstan Public Prosecutor's Office told Forum 18 in 2007 that "the aim of the searches was to find the literature", even though no court had then deemed it "extremist".

Izberbash: released from detention, but still under investigation

A third Muslim who met others to read Nursi's works, Ibragim Abdulzhalilovich Murtazaliyev (born 11 July 1966), remains under investigation in the Republic of Dagestan ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2563](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2563)) in the north Caucasus. He is thought to have been released from detention. It is still unknown whether or not he has been charged, and whether the case against him is under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 or Part 2.

FSB security service officers arrested Murtazaliyev during a series of house searches in the town of Izberbash ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2563](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2563)) on 17 March 2020. They also detained Ziyavdin Badirsoltanovich Dapayev (born 12 May 1982), but released him after questioning. He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in November 2017 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2339](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2339)) for alleged involvement in "Nurdzhular", and was released in April 2019. He had previously been convicted on similar charges in 2011 and had received a suspended sentence. No further criminal case is known to have been opened against him.

Murtazaliyev's name was added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists" on 1 April 2020. Dapayev is also still on the List ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2339](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2339)) as a consequence of the earlier cases against him.

Widespread raids on Jehovah's Witness homes continue

Since January 2018, the Investigative Committee, FSB, and other agencies have conducted raids on Jehovah's Witness homes in 58 of Russia's 83 federal subjects ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2355](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2355)) (not including forcibly annexed Ukrainian territory). These have been followed, almost invariably, by criminal prosecutions for "continuing the activities" of the banned Jehovah's Witness Administrative Centre ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2297](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2297)) and its subsidiary organisations. Many regions have seen multiple criminal cases ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2620](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2620)).

Several Jehovah's Witnesses have also been prosecuted in Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed (<https://www.nhc.no/en/qa-breaches-of-international-law-and-human-rights-issues-2/>) from Ukraine in 2014. Two have been jailed and sent to Russia to serve their sentences ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2617](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2617)), another trial is underway, and further criminal cases are under investigation.

Since early October 2020, the Investigative Committee, FSB security service, police, and National Guard have conducted at least 86 raids or searches in 16 regions. The raids in two regions (Tula Region and the city of Moscow) were the first in those regions. Although some raids were connected with ongoing prosecutions, most resulted from the opening of 13 new criminal cases involving 26 people so far.

## Four deaths before cases reach court

Yury Aleksandrovich Kim (born 21 September 1960), whose home in the Penza Region town of Nikolsk was raided on 11 October, died on 30 October after returning from the regional capital (120kms or 75 miles away). He had been summoned to court "to acquaint himself with materials relating to the search", according to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Investigators had opened a case against Kim under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity") and placed him under travel restrictions.

On 15 December, six weeks after his death, the authorities added Kim to the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) "List of Terrorists and Extremists" ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)). Banks are obliged to freeze the assets of people on this list.

Kim, an amputee who had also lost some of his fingers, told Jehovah's Witnesses on 13 October how he had had difficulty orientating himself when armed officers knocked on the door early in the morning. His wife, Vera Kim, saw that one operative was outside the window about to break it in with a tyre iron, and managed to get the door open before he did so.

Kim also suffered from hypertension and heart problems, and had been hospitalised two years before after a suspected stroke. "During the search, my blood pressure rose sharply. By the evening, I felt ill again. The pressure did not subside, in the morning I had another nosebleed, my heart began to hurt again."

Yury Kim is the fourth Jehovah's Witness to die before his trial began. Yury Mikhailovich Geraskov (born 12 January 1956) died on 24 April 2020 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2571](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2571)), shortly before the first full hearing in his case was due to take place at Pervomaysky District Court in Kirov. He had not spent any time in detention, but "stress connected with persecution for his faith had negatively affected Yury's health", Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

Viktor Ivanovich Malkov (born 21 February 1959) died in Smolensk on 26 April 2020 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2571](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2571)), having spent eight months in detention and nearly four months under house arrest. He had suffered from coronary heart disease and kidney problems. "Viktor's health was largely influenced by poor conditions in pre-trial detention centres and the stress associated with criminal prosecution", Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

Irina Vladimirovna Sidorova (born 3 March 1976) died in hospital on 17 July 2020 after two operations. Prosecutors had opened a criminal case against her on 20 April. Prosecutors had her added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists" on 25 June, some three weeks before her death. She remains on the list, despite her death.

Sergey Aleksandrovich Mysin (born 21 June 1965) was handed a four-year suspended sentence plus ten months of restrictions on freedoms ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2620](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2620)) in Ulyanovsk on 8 October despite serious health concerns. Jehovah's Witnesses say he was discharged early from intensive care in October 2019 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2571](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2571)) after FSB security service officers went to the hospital to insist on his treatment being stopped. Ulyanovsk Region FSB refused to answer any questions from Forum 18 on the incident.

## Moscow prosecutions follow raids

The first criminal prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses in the capital Moscow after the 2017 ban began early in the morning of 24 November, when Investigative Committee officials arrived to search about 20 households, accompanied by armed police, National Guard troops, and members of the FSB security service ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)). Investigators had had the Jehovah's Witnesses under surveillance for "many months", according to Jehovah's Witnesses.

At several Moscow addresses, armed men broke down the doors, Jehovah's Witnesses stated on 9 December. Electronic devices, cash, bank cards, personal documents, cassettes, and in one household "even a calculator" were confiscated.

Officers also tortured two men, leaving one requiring hospitalisation for a head injury ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)). Several people were taken away for questioning, during which some were threatened with prison and having their children taken away. Three men have been charged and two more named as suspects under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)) ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

The more seriously injured Jehovah's Witness was Vardan Zakaryan. One operative hit him in the head with a rifle butt, knocking him down, Jehovah's Witnesses stated on 30 November. Zakaryan's wife (who, along with their daughter, is not a Jehovah's Witness) was ordered to lie on the floor. His daughter stated: "Entering the living room, I saw a 10 centimetre [4 inch] bloodstain on the floor, and my dad was lying on the couch with a fresh bloody wound on his forehead. He was pale and trembling all over."

([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)) Zakaryan subsequently had to spend two days in hospital, before the hospital released him "at the insistence of security officers".

Investigative Committee investigator Dmitry Smadich charged Zakaryan under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. Zakaryan also appears to be under investigation under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1.1 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2620](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2620)) ("Inclination, recruitment or other involvement of a person in an extremist organisation").

On 27 November, a court extended Zakaryan's time in temporary detention (normally 48 hours). At the temporary detention centre, Jehovah's Witnesses claim, "they exerted strong psychological pressure on him, trying to force him to incriminate his fellow believers and take the blame for extremism".

Presna District Court ordered on 30 November that Zakaryan should be placed under house arrest until 23 January 2021.

Upon his release, Zakaryan filed complaints about his treatment with the Moscow City Prosecutor's Office and the Moscow Human Rights Ombudsperson Tatyana Potayeva ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)).

A 33-second video on the Investigative Committee's YouTube channel shows (without commentary) two men in black uniforms and balaclavas forcing open the door of a flat and pulling it off its hinges. The video then cuts to a few seconds' footage of officers moving through the flat's interior, and ends with a shot of bundles of cash lying on a surface, and an open book with its title page blurred out.

Jehovah's Witnesses say that this is footage of the raid on Yury Chernyshev's home, during which he was knocked to the floor and his wife Yekaterina made to stand facing the wall ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2623](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2623)). Officials then placed the two adults and their underage daughter in separate rooms, forbidding them from speaking to each other. After the nine-hour search, both Yury and Yekaterina were taken away for interrogation, after which she was released and he was sent to a temporary detention centre.

"According to the investigation, in the period from June 2019 to the present, a group of people, aware of the entry into force of the decision of the Supreme Court, organised the work of a local religious division of this organisation [ie. Jehovah's Witnesses] in the northeast of Moscow", the Moscow Investigative Committee said in a press statement on 24 November.

"The conspiratorial gatherings took place in an apartment on Chelyuskinskaya Street, where the adherents studied religious literature and other sources of information propagating the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and carried out other actions characteristic of this association. It was also found that the members of the division persuaded and recruited new members from among the residents of the capital and other regions to participate in a prohibited religious movement."

The criminal case so far involves five people:

- Vardan Pegasovich Zakaryan (born 1971) – charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity"). Six days in temporary detention, then house arrest;
- Ivan Stepanovich Chaykovsky (born 1955) and Yury Yevgenyevich Chernyshev (born 1963) – charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. Three days in temporary detention, then house arrest;
- Vitaly Viktorovich Komarov (born 1976) – suspect under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. Three days in temporary detention, then house arrest;
- and Sergey Grigoryevich Shatalov (born 1969) – suspect under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1. Three days in temporary detention, then house arrest.

Ivan Chaykovsky was chair of the Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow when its activity was banned by a local court in March 2004 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=289](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=289)). The ruling was upheld by Moscow City Court in June 2004 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=344](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=344)).

Chaykovsky was later one of four applicants in the Jehovah's Witnesses' appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg (Application No. 302/02) over the Moscow authorities' refusal to re-register the Moscow community as a local religious organisation. The ECtHR upheld the appeal in 2010 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1466](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1466)), and the community eventually regained registration in 2015 ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2095](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2095)). The community was liquidated again two years later when the 2017 nationwide ban on Jehovah's Witness activity ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2297](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2297)) came into force.

Only two criminal cases dropped

Only two criminal prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses, involving three people, are known to have been halted at the investigation stage.

- Arkhangelsk case dropped

Arkhangelsk Region Investigative Committee dropped its case against Kaleriya Fyodorovna Mamykina (born 18 April 1941) on 27 November 2019. Investigators concluded that, by hosting fellow Jehovah's Witnesses in her home, she had simply "exercised her right to freedom of religion under Article 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation" and had "had no intention of participating in the activities of a [banned] religious organisation". Mamykina had therefore committed no offence under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 ("Participation in the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

Investigators had had Mamykina's name added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists" on 18 July 2019. It was removed on 31 December 2019.

- Sakhalin case dropped

On 27 August 2020, the Sakhalin Region branch of the FSB security service closed its case against Vyacheslav Vladimirovich Ivanov (born 26 July 1970) and Dmitry Sergeyeovich Kulakov (born 1996). Both were suspects under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 ("Participation in the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity"). The FSB decided their activities were of "a general religious character, associated with the right to practice religion, which is not prohibited in the Russian Federation, [and] is guaranteed by Article 28 of the Constitution".

- Five Sakhalin cases continued

Ivanov has nevertheless been charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2 as part of a separate prosecution also involving Dmitry Kulakov's parents and two others:

- Tatyana Vladimirovna Kulakova (born 12 August 1973, charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2) and Sergey Vladimirovich Kulakov (born 18 April 1961, charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1 "Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity");

- Aleksandr Alekseyevich Kozlitin (born 14 October 1975, charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 2) and Yevgeny Vladimirovich Yelin (born 7 November 1974, charged under Criminal Code Article 282.2, Part 1).

Ivanov, Kozlitin, and Sergey Kulakov have all been added to the Rosfinmonitoring "List of Terrorists and Extremists" ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)). Ivanov was added on 28 November 2019, the other two on 31 October 2019.

Neither Tatyana Kulakova nor her son Dmitry appears on the List. (END)

Full reports on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Russia  
(<https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?query=&religion=all&country=10>)

For more background see Forum 18's survey of the general state of freedom of religion and belief in Russia ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2246](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2246)), as well as Forum 18's survey of the dramatic decline in this freedom related to Russia's Extremism Law ([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2215](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2215)).

A personal commentary by Alexander Verkhovsky, Director of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis  
<https://www.sova-center.ru>, about the systemic problems of Russian anti-extremism legislation  
([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1468](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1468))

Forum 18's compilation of Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) freedom of religion or belief commitments  
([https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=1351](https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1351))

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