



THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



ASOCIACIÓN SIMPLE DE LOS
Testigos de Jehová
— EN LAS AMÉRICAS —



GENERAL INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION
ASIA-PACIFIC ASSOCIATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES



AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

5 April 2023

In behalf of
The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses,
Asia-Pacific Association of Jehovah's Witnesses,
African Association of Jehovah's Witnesses
and
Asociación Simple de los Testigos de Jehová en las Américas

Contribution for the
44th session of the Universal Periodic Review
(6–18 November 2023)

Russian Federation

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The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, Asia-Pacific Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, African Association of Jehovah's Witnesses and Asociación Simple de los Testigos de Jehová en las Américas – Russian Federation

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The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (EAJW) is a charity registered in the United Kingdom. It provides support to Jehovah's Witnesses facing fundamental human rights violations in various parts of the world.

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Asociación Simple de los Testigos de Jehová en las Américas (AJWA) is a civil association constituted in Argentina. It supports the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses and promotes the protection of fundamental freedoms in various part of the world, mainly in the Americas region.

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SUMMARY OF THE SUBMISSION

This submission to the Human Rights Council on the Russian Federation highlights human rights issues and current failures to implement accepted recommendations by the Russian Federation during the previous Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle.

The actions of the Russian Federation have had serious repercussions on the lives of thousands of Russian Jehovah's Witnesses. This document provides a non-exhaustive overview of that ongoing persecution.

Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia and as a worldwide organization are deeply concerned by the refusal of the Russian Federation to address the serious human rights violations perpetrated against peaceful believers. They respectfully request the Government of the Russian Federation to:

- (1) End the current persecution in which Jehovah's Witnesses are subject to home raids, arrest, prosecution, financial restrictions, imprisonment and torture, merely for the peaceful exercise of their religious beliefs;
- (2) Immediately release all of Jehovah's Witnesses currently in prison or under house arrest and expunge any criminal convictions for the exercise of their rights under the Constitution of the Russian Federation (the Constitution) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the Covenant);
- (3) Remove the religious literature of Jehovah's Witnesses, including the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (the Holy Bible), from the Federal List of Extremist Materials;
- (4) Restore the National Administrative Centre of Jehovah's Witnesses and local religious associations;
- (5) Restore the confiscated Administrative Centre and other religious properties or pay the compensation awarded by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR);
- (6) Abide by its commitment to uphold fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the Covenant for all citizens, including Jehovah's Witnesses.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Jehovah's Witnesses have been present in Russia since 1891. They enjoyed a measure of freedom to worship following national registration in the then Soviet Union on 27 March 1991, and were reregistered on 29 April 1999, in accordance with the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations. After the Russian Federation amended the Federal Law on Counteracting Extremist Activity in 2006, Jehovah's Witnesses became the target of increasing government harassment.
2. The authorities have grossly misapplied this legislation to the peaceful religious activity of Jehovah's Witnesses. A legal veneer has been created to criminalize the peaceful worship of the Witnesses, and they are treated as if they were dangerous criminals.

3. On 20 April 2017, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation liquidated all legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, terminated their activity, and allowed for confiscation of their property. While this decision did not specifically prohibit the worship of Jehovah's Witnesses, persecution of them drastically increased, with countless searches, arrests and prosecutions.
4. In October 2021, the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation announced that communal worship and religious ceremonies of Jehovah's Witnesses do not constitute a crime under article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (CrC RF), despite liquidation of the religion's legal entities. Nevertheless, since that clarification, more than 150 of Jehovah's Witnesses have been convicted by Russian courts.
5. On 7 June 2022, the ECHR issued a 194-page judgment in the case of *Taganrog LRO and Others v. Russia* (the *Taganrog* judgment), application nos. 32401/10 and 19 others. This consolidated the case of the Taganrog local religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses with 19 related cases lodged between 2010 and 2019, and ruled decisively in favour of the Witnesses. The Court found violations of articles 5 (right to liberty and security), 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and 1 of protocol 1 (protection of property) of the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) and ordered Russia to take corrective and compensatory measures.

The 7 June 2022 ECHR Judgment

In a resounding reaffirmation of its 2007 and 2010 judgments regarding the prosecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation,¹ the Court:

- Declared the nationwide ban on Jehovah's Witnesses unlawful
- Ordered Russia to:
 - Discontinue pending criminal proceedings against Jehovah's Witnesses
 - Release imprisoned Jehovah's Witnesses
 - Return all confiscated properties within three months of the present judgment becoming final or pay the applicants some 59 million euros (EUR)
 - Within the same three-month period, pay:
 - EUR 15,000 in damages to individuals criminally convicted
 - EUR 7,500 each to the liquidated or banned organizations or congregations
 - EUR 1,000 each to individual applicants for non-pecuniary damages
 - EUR 125,000 jointly to all applicants for costs and expenses

¹ ECHR, *Kuznetsov and Others v. Russia*, application No. 184/02, 11 January 2007; ECHR, *Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow and Others v. Russia*, application No. 302/02, 10 June 2010.

6. The *Taganrog* judgment reaffirms the clear and binding conclusions of the ECHR in, inter alia, the cases of *Jehovah's Witnesses of Moscow and Others v. Russia* (application no. 302/02) and *Kuznetsov and Others v. Russia* (application no. 184/02).
7. Highlighting the egregious disregard of international human rights standards by the Russian Federation, the *Taganrog* judgment goes beyond consideration of the applicants' cases and specifically orders, at paragraph 290, that the State party "take all necessary measures to secure the discontinuation of all pending criminal proceedings against Jehovah's Witnesses, including by reference to the recently amended guidance by the Supreme Court of Russia ... and release of all Jehovah's Witnesses who have been deprived of their liberty".
8. However, a letter dated 26 January 2023, to the applicants' lawyer from the Prosecutor General of Russia, dismisses any obligation to implement the *Taganrog* judgment. The response relies on the notion that the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe (CoE) on 16 March 2022.
9. Under its treaty obligations, the Russian Federation remains bound by the Convention and subject to the jurisdiction of the ECHR for events taking place until 16 September 2022. A letter dated 9 December 2022, from the Secretary General of the CoE to Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, stated: "This obligation entails the implementation by Russia of individual measures to put, as far as possible, the applicants back in the position they would have been had the violations not occurred, and to adopt general measures to prevent the repetition of similar violations."
10. The obligation of the Russian Federation to remedy its egregious actions and to pay the awarded damages was reiterated in the CoE Committee of Ministers statement of 8 December 2022, which deplored lack of progress on the *Taganrog* judgment.
11. On 31 January 2023, the ECHR again ruled in favour of Jehovah's Witnesses in the case of *Nabokikh and Others v. Russia* (application no. 19428/11 and 6 others), which concerns disruption of religious meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses.
12. The ECHR found further violations of articles 9 of the Convention (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and awarded a total of EUR 345,773 in pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages plus EUR 5,000 in costs and expenses.
13. The following information provides details of the actions of Russia towards Jehovah's Witnesses.

II. ISSUES

A. Restriction on Freedom of Worship and Association

State Censorship of Religious Literature

14. No religious literature of Jehovah's Witnesses can be imported into Russia. Based on purported expert studies, Russian courts have declared more than 100 of the religious publications of the Witnesses 'extremist' and added them to the Federal List of Extremist Materials.

State Confiscation of Property

15. Since 20 April 2017, when the Russian Supreme Court effectively banned the peaceful worship of Jehovah's Witnesses, the authorities have progressively seized 160 properties owned by Jehovah's Witnesses, with an additional 33 properties subject to confiscation. The total value of these properties is estimated at more than EUR 51,350,000.
16. One such property is the former Administrative Centre in Solnechnoye, which is owned by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. This property alone is valued at approximately EUR 27,027,000. Forty-three of the confiscated properties belong to foreign legal entities used by Jehovah's Witnesses in Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United States, which were not parties to the seizure proceedings. Such seizures are illegal because the Supreme Court decision banning Jehovah's Witnesses did not provide a legal basis for confiscating foreign-owned properties.

B. Abuses and Restrictions of Religious Freedom

Unjust Imprisonments – Increasingly Lengthy and Harsh Sentences

17. Events during the five years since 2017 demonstrate that the Russian authorities are implementing, in the words of the *Taganrog* judgment, “a policy ... designed to cause Jehovah's Witnesses to abandon their faith and to prevent others from joining it.”
18. The pattern of searches and arrests conveys the message that no one who shares the sincere religious faith of Jehovah's Witnesses is exempt from prosecution, imprisonment or abusive treatment. The following examples are illustrative.
19. **Orel, Orel Region.** On **24 May 2022**, Dennis Christensen, a citizen of Denmark, imprisoned on charges of “organizing the activity of a banned organization,” was released after five years in detention in Russia. The *Taganrog* judgment held that since “the entire criminal procedure [Mr. Christensen's arrest, trial and conviction] was tainted with arbitrariness, the Court finds that Mr Christensen's pre-trial detention and imprisonment were not based on a ‘reasonable suspicion’ of his having committed any offence and was therefore in breach of the requirements of Article 5 of the Convention.” (para. 273)
20. **Magadan, Magadan Region.** “Dalstroï,” the system of Soviet labour camps, was headquartered in Magadan. The “Mask of Tears” monument commemorates the victims of political repression, among whom were Jehovah's Witnesses. The recent strategy of religious persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses, which began in 2018 in Magadan and continues today, is also emblematic – it has been repeated in hundreds of other cases throughout Russia. The typical pattern is to open a case against an individual or a small number of Witnesses, to aggressively and occasionally violently search their homes, detain them, pressure them to collaborate with their accusers, bring them to trial, and then progressively add additional Witnesses to the list of defendants – often individuals who have testified in favour of their fellow believers or provided other support.
21. In May 2018, the homes of Jehovah's Witnesses Konstantin Petrov and two fellow believers were searched and the men were detained in a pretrial detention facility. The same day, the home of Ivan Puyda in Khabarovsk was searched and he was also detained and transferred 1,600 kilometres to the Magadan facility. The four men remained in pretrial detention for between five and eight months before being placed under house arrest.

22. By 2019, the number of defendants in this case had grown to 13, of whom 6 were women. All were ordered not to leave the area. After multiple hearings, on **14 March 2022**, Prosecutor Oleg Sekelnikov sent 62 volumes of case material to the Magadan City Court. The trial began on **25 April 2022**, and is ongoing, under Judge Tatyana Belyayeva.

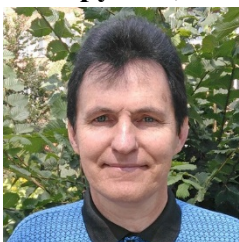
23. **Astrakhan, Astrakhan Region.** In June 2020, the homes of 26 families of Jehovah's Witnesses were raided and searched. Fifty-four-year-old widow Anna Safronova, the primary caregiver for her 81-year-old mother, subsequently appeared as a witness in the trial of a fellow believer. On **28 May 2021**, investigator Nikolai Banko opened a criminal case against her under CrC RF articles 282.2(2) and 282.3(1) "participating in the activities of [and] financing an extremist organization."



24. Before Ms. Safronova learned of the criminal case against her, her name was added to the Rosfinmonitoring list of "extremists," which triggered the freezing of her bank account. On 2 June 2021, her home was searched. She was placed in detention and then under house arrest, accused of "with criminal intent, participating in online religious meetings, including the performance of songs and prayers to Jehovah God," and of "controlling the flow of funds in the form of donations from the ... parishioners."

25. Ms. Safronova was under house arrest for 237 days. On **25 January 2022**, Trusovskiy District Court of Astrakhan Judge Alexander Lepskiy sentenced her to six years in a penal colony. On **14 April 2022**, a panel of judges chaired by Nikolai Maryevskiy in the Astrakhan Regional Court upheld this decision, which is the longest sentence given to a woman convicted for her faith. By comparison, under the CrC RF, the maximum punishment for grievous bodily harm is eight years (article 111(1)); for kidnapping, five years (article 126(1)); and for rape, three to six years (article 131(1)).

26. **Prokopyevsk, Kemerovo Region.** On **2 July 2020**, Federal Security Service (FSB)



investigator Ivan Sablin opened a criminal case under CrC RF article 282.2(1) against Andrey Vlasov, a 54-year-old professional photographer. Mr. Vlasov suffers from a physical disability that severely limits his movement, needing assistance to put on his socks and to care for his legs and feet. Despite his disability, he was kept for 48 hours in a pretrial detention centre and was subsequently placed under house arrest, with terms preventing him from receiving medical care. Mr.

Vlasov was forbidden to use the Internet, to send or receive postal or electronic communications of any kind, or to communicate with participants in the criminal case. Extreme social isolation contributed to a deterioration of his health, which is ongoing. Judge Pavel Kotykhov, of the Central District Court of Prokopyevsk, repeatedly denied Mr. Vlasov access to medical care, and extended his house arrest, which ultimately lasted 679 days.

27. On **23 May 2022**, Judge Kotykhov found Mr. Vlasov guilty and sentenced him to seven years in a penal colony. On **27 July 2022**, a panel of judges of the Kemerovo Regional Court chaired by Larisa Korneyeva denied his appeal.

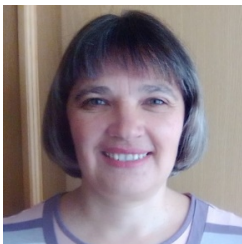
28. **Krasnoyarsk, Krasnoyarsk Territory.** On **27 June 2022**, Judge Nataliya Nikolayeva of the



Oktyabrsky District Court of Krasnoyarsk sentenced Evgeniy Zinich to six years' imprisonment. Investigator Konstantin Zhuikov opened a criminal case against Mr. Zinich, who had previously testified in the trial of a fellow believer, under CrC RF article 282.2(1) in January 2021. He is a third-generation Jehovah's Witness and a third-generation target of religious persecution. Mr. Zinich's grandfather refused to take up arms for religious reasons and was imprisoned. His father and mother were exiled to Khakassia in 1951 as part of "Operation North".

29. Mr. Zinich's wife, Mariya, a group II disabled person, died of a serious illness during his criminal prosecution. In her doctor's opinion, the prosecution contributed to her premature death. Mr. Zinich is also the caregiver for his 83-year-old mother.
30. In Mr. Zinich's closing statement to the court, he said: "My wife could not hold out long enough to see my acquittal. My mother, who is already 83 years old, would also very much like to live to see her son acquitted." On 19 January 2023, the verdict was upheld on appeal.
31. A total of 27 of Jehovah's Witnesses, defendants in 18 criminal cases, face criminal prosecution in the Krasnoyarsk Region. Nine Witnesses have already been convicted.

32. **Pavlovskaya, Krasnodar Territory.** On **20 April 2020**, FSB investigator Kolyerov opened



a criminal case against 44-year-old Lyudmila Shchekoldina, a former primary school teacher. She was accused of "committing deliberate actions aimed at involving [FSB agent Ilchenko, who feigned interest in learning about the Bible,] in the activities of an extremist organization ... by describing the attractiveness of serving Jehovah," and charged under CrC RF articles 282.2(1.1) and 282.2(2).


33. In her testimony, Ms. Shchekoldina said: "I am actually accused of believing in God and remaining one of Jehovah's Witnesses, that is, enjoying the right guaranteed by article 28 of the Constitution. ... The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation made it clear that its decision of 20 April 2017 does not in any way prohibit the constitutional rights of citizens, including mine. I think that the bodies of preliminary investigation incorrectly and arbitrarily interpret the decision of the Supreme Court. It is this misinterpretation, and not the alleged crime I committed, that is the reason that I am in the dock today."
34. On **23 May 2022**, the court found Ms. Shchekoldina guilty and sentenced her to four years and one month's imprisonment. On **14 June** a lawyer visited her in the Pretrial Detention Centre no. 1 in Krasnodar. She was not feeling well (her health was poor during the investigation and trial) and was being held in a cell with only 12 beds for 13 people, so she was sleeping on a mattress on the floor.

35. **Seversk, Tomsk Region.** On **14 July 2020**, FSB and Investigative Committee agents,



accompanied by two special police force (OMON) officers, appeared at the Mayor's Office in Seversk. They arrested 32-year-old Andrey Ledyaykin, who had been employed there for 10 years, and went to his home, where they conducted a search. On **25 March 2021**, Investigator A.G. Kolpakov opened a criminal case against Mr. Ledyaykin under CrC RF article 282.2(2). A key witness was FSB agent Kira Klisheva, who had pretended to be interested in studying

the Bible and had secretly recorded video conversations with him.

36. Mr. Ledyaykin's trial began on **12 July 2021**. Defending his right to share his faith with others, he cited the comment of Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation A.K. Lukashevich at the OSCE meeting on 14 February 2019: "We emphasize again that nothing prevents Jehovah's Witnesses from freely professing their faith in Russia, since no formal permission is required for prayers."
37. Mr. Ledyaykin lost his employment at the Mayor's Office as a result of his prosecution. His former supervisor testified in his behalf, characterizing Mr. Ledyaykin as "an exceptionally decent, responsible person, a professional in his field," adding, "When he left, many cried."
38. On **26 April 2022**, Judge Yekaterina Soldatenko of the Seversk City Court found Mr. Ledyaykin guilty and sentenced him to two years and two months' imprisonment. On **14 July 2022**, his punishment was changed to a suspended sentence of two years and two months.
39. **Kostroma, Kostroma Region**. In **July 2018**, police officers, accompanied by a detachment of OMON officers, broke down the front door and searched Dmitry Terebilov's apartment while no one was at home. A year later, the Investigative Committee opened a criminal case against Mr. Terebilov under CrC RF article 282.2(2). The charge states that he distributed "extremist" literature and participated in meetings. On **6 September 2021**, Mr. Terebilov was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and was sent to a "strict regime" colony as a repeat offender.
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40. Before becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mr. Terebilov had been imprisoned on other grounds. While in prison, he began reading the Bible and was granted early release for good behaviour. As he explained: "It was thanks to what was written in the Bible that I began to change my life for the better and get rid of bad habits (smoking, foul language, drug use). Why should I stop practising my religion ... associating with my fellow believers, reading the Bible, praying, and talking about God to others?" On **12 January 2022**, a panel of judges chaired by Judge Yuliya Shumilova denied Mr. Terebilov's appeal despite the recent publication of clarifications by the Plenum of the Supreme Court indicating that divine services and joint rituals and ceremonies do not in themselves constitute a crime under CrC RF article 282.2(2).

Unjust Imprisonments – Multiple Family Members Targeted

41. In recent months, there have been several instances in which more than one member of the same family has been criminally prosecuted, bringing the number of Witness families thus mistreated by the Russian authorities to 53. This strategy appears to be calculated to instil fear in all Witness family members and to maximize the emotional and financial stress when family members are left without needed support. In some instances, family members are arrested together; in other cases, one member is taken into custody and charged, and proceedings are later initiated against another.
42. **Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Kamchatka Territory**. On **3 September 2021**, Dmitriy Semyonov (37) and his wife, Nadyezhda (36), were charged with "attempting to recruit people into an extremist organization" under CrC RF article 282.2(1.1). They are under orders not to leave their city or region.

43. **Novokuznetsk, Kemerovo Region.** On **3 June 2021**, Investigator Pavel Nyekhoroshev

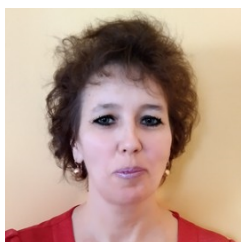


a case under article 282.2(1) against 64-year-pensioner Sergey Sushilnikov. When searching Sushilnikovs’ home, security forces used force the couple and damaged their property. Sushilnikov remains under an order not to leave city. On **20 June 2022**, a separate case was against his 63-year-old wife, Tatyana.

44. **Zeya, Amur Region.** On **10 August 2020**, FSB investigator Obykhov opened a case under



article CrC RF 282.2(2) against Yevgeniy Bitusov, father of a 20-year-old son and a 12-year-old daughter, who had earlier testified in defence of a fellow believer. Mr. Bitusov is under an order not to leave his city. On **15 February 2022**, a case was opened against his sister, Yelena Yatsyk, and fellow believers Galina Yatsyk (72) and Margarita Moiseyenko (43), whose husband Konstantin had previously been convicted and given a six-year suspended sentence. The women were accused of “realizing that by their actions they were undermining the foundations of the constitutional order and the security of the state ... [by taking part in] ... religious events.”



Yelena Yatsyk



Galina Yatsyk



Margarita Moiseyenko



Konstantin Moiseyenko

45. **Abakan, Khakassia.** The oldest female Witness to be incarcerated, and the first woman



282.2(2)

given a prison sentence under CrC RF article is 71-year-old retired accountant Baranovskaya. On **10 April 2019**, her in Abakan, Khakassia, was raided by armed officers. She and her only son, were both charged under CrC RF 282.2(1) and 282.2(2). Later, ’s charge was reduced to article alone.

46. On **20 July 2020**, Mrs. Baranovskaya suffered a stroke and was hospitalized. When hearings resumed on 14 December 2020, the prosecutor asked religious scholar N.S. Volkov to describe the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Mr. Volkov replied: “Naturally, they preach the Gospel ... There is essentially nothing illegal about their preaching ... [I]n moral terms, these are ordinary, deeply decent people.”

47. On **24 February 2021**, Judge Yelena Shcherbakova of the Abakan City Court of the Republic of Khakassia sentenced Mrs. Baranovskaya to two years’ imprisonment and her son, Roman, to six years, for practising their faith.

48. During her imprisonment, Mrs. Baranovskaya’s health deteriorated. On **18 October 2021**, an appeal in the Ust-Abakan District Court for her release based on CrC RF article 81, “release

from punishment due to illness,” was denied.

49. On **22 February 2022**, Mrs. Baranovskaya's parole application was granted by Judge Mariya Zablotzkaya in the Ust-Abakan District Court. The prosecutor appealed, stating that Mrs. Baranovskaya “had not repented” because she did not renounce her faith as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.
50. On **4 May 2022**, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Khakassia denied the prosecutor's appeal and Mrs. Baranovskaya was granted early release. Her son, Roman, remains incarcerated.

Violent Searches

51. **Irkutsk, Irkutsk Region.** Yaroslav Kalin (53) was born in Siberia because his parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were exiled in Soviet times for being Jehovah's Witnesses. On **1 October 2021**, Mr. Kalin told a family member, “I know I'm going to end up in prison – I just don't know when.” At 6.15 a.m. on **4 October 2021**, he and his wife, Tatyana, woke up to the sound of their windows being smashed. When he went to investigate, he was thrown onto the glass-strewed floor by armed OMON officers, cutting his legs, elbows and hands.
52. At the same time, the home of the Kalins' daughter, Liliya Merinova, and her husband, Nikolay, and 10 other residences of Jehovah's Witnesses in Irkutsk were also being searched by OMON officers. Officers hit Nikolay Merinov with a heavy, blunt object, knocking him unconscious, and breaking a front tooth. When he regained consciousness, an officer was sitting on top of him and beating him. Officers dragged Mrs. Merinova out of bed by her hair, handcuffed her, and then assaulted her repeatedly before allowing her to get dressed.
53. Elsewhere in Irkutsk, officers forced their way into the home of Witnesses Anatoly and Greta Razdobarov. The officers dragged Mrs. Razdobarova into another room by her hair, handcuffed her with arms behind her back, and repeatedly hit her. Meanwhile, other officers forced Mr. Razdobarov to the floor with his arms handcuffed behind his back, and kicked him in the head and abdomen. They grabbed his handcuffed hands, wrenched him up off the ground, and beat his hands while demanding that he incriminate himself and divulge information about his fellow believers. Officers further tortured Mr. Razdobarov by trying to force a glass bottle between his buttocks. That raid lasted more than eight hours.
54. Andrey Tolmachev is the sole caregiver for his mother and disabled father. Officers beat him in front of his parents until he lost consciousness.
55. The officers took six of the Witnesses whose homes were searched to a temporary detention facility and eventually incarcerated them in Detention Centre no. 1 in the Irkutsk Region, where they remain.

Names Added to the Rosfinmonitoring List of Terrorists and Extremists

56. To date, the names of more than 500 men and women who are Jehovah's Witnesses have been added to the Rosfinmonitoring list of terrorists or extremists. The stated purpose of this list is to combat “laundering the proceeds of crime, financing terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.” As in Mrs. Safronova's case, names are often added to the list before the individual is aware that a criminal case has been opened, blocking bank accounts and causing difficulties in finding employment, buying and selling, receiving loans or obtaining credit.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS

57. Following its previous review in 2018, the Russian Federation supported specific recommendations made by member States.
58. Subsequently, the Russian Federation reaffirmed its commitment to meeting its international human rights obligations, including those under the UPR, specifically including the recommendations below. (A/HRC/39/13/Add.1, para. 1)
59. Estonia recommended: “Ensure that the Russian Federation’s international human rights obligations are fully implemented, as foreseen in the Russian Constitution.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.26)
60. Mali recommended: “Focus efforts on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, step up these efforts and efforts in the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.74)
61. Pakistan urged: “Take additional steps to combat and prevent dissemination and propaganda of ideologies, supremacy ideas or theories based on race, ethnic, religious or social origin that justify or encourage any form of racial hatred and discrimination.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.83)
62. Italy recommended: “Take concrete measures to combat all forms of discrimination, including when based on religion or belief and on sexual orientation, in compliance with international obligations.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.90)
63. Austria recommended: “Ensure that all investigations into cases of abductions, unlawful detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, as well as killings, are conducted thoroughly and effectively.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.110)
64. Germany recommended: “Investigate allegations of torture and inhuman treatment in custody in a transparent manner and bring those responsible to justice.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.113)
65. Estonia recommended: “Ensure fully everyone’s right to exercise freedom of expression.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.154)
66. Peru recommended: “Strengthen human rights guarantees for freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.155)
67. France recommended: “Guarantee freedom of expression, particularly online, as well as freedom of the media.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.167)
68. Slovakia recommended: “Take effective and credible measures to protect and facilitate the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of association.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.175)
69. Czechia urged: “Ensure that the federal law on combating extremist activity is not arbitrarily used to limit freedom of expression.” (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.185)
70. New Zealand recommended: “Uphold the rights to freedom of conscience and religion by refraining from outlawing religious groups as ‘extremist’ solely for the peaceful practice of

their religious beliefs, such as has happened with Jehovah's Witnesses." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.199)

71. Australia recommended: "Observe constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and ensure religious groups are not subject to discrimination." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.206)
72. Brazil recommended: "Step up efforts to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief, including by ensuring the freedom of all individuals to establish and maintain religious, charitable or humanitarian institutions." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.207)
73. Jehovah's Witnesses have seen no evidence of the implementation of these recommendations.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS NOT ACCEPTED AND PERTAINING TO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

74. Russia has been reluctant to accede to recommendations specifically about or including Jehovah's Witnesses. For example, Russia noted but did not formally accept:
75. Spain recommended: "Reconsider the recent outlawing of the Jehovah Witnesses and stop their persecution." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.200)
76. Iceland recommended: "End the targeting of Jehovah's Witnesses for exercising their freedom of religion." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.201)
77. Denmark recommended: "Respect its international obligations and amend its legislation to ensure the right to the peaceful enjoyment of freedom of religion and belief for adherents of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.202)
78. Luxembourg recommended: "Refrain from banning religious groups on the grounds of extremism, even though they practise their religious belief in a peaceful way, and also withdraw administrative accusations and criminal accusations against their members." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.203)
79. Finland recommended: "Refrain from outlawing religious groups as 'extremist' and ensure them the right to fully practise their religion or belief." (A/HRC/39/13, para. 147.204)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

80. Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation and as a worldwide organization express deep concern at the refusal of the Russian Federation to address the serious human rights violations perpetrated against peaceful believers. They respectfully request the Government of Russia to take the necessary steps to:
 - (1) End the current persecution in which Jehovah's Witnesses are subject to home raids, arrest, prosecution, financial restrictions, imprisonment and torture merely for the peaceful exercise of their religious beliefs;
 - (2) Immediately release all of Jehovah's Witnesses currently in prison or under house arrest and expunge any criminal convictions for the exercise of their rights under the Constitution and the Covenant;

- (3) Remove the religious literature of Jehovah's Witnesses, including the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (the Holy Bible), from the Federal List of Extremist Materials;
- (4) Restore the National Administrative Centre of Jehovah's Witnesses and local religious associations;
- (5) Restore the confiscated Administrative Centre and other religious properties or pay the compensation awarded by the ECHR;
- (6) Abide by its commitment to uphold fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the Covenant for all citizens, including Jehovah's Witnesses.