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RUSSIA: 2015 prosecutions for publicly sharing beliefs

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

Unapproved sharing of beliefs were a quarter of 2015 prosecutions for public events in Russia. Forum 18 found 119 individuals and 3 religious organisations prosecuted, a sharp rise on 2014. Initial punishments were 80 fines, 2 short-term jailings and one community service term.

Large numbers of individuals across Russia are facing prosecution for expressing their religious beliefs in public under legislation which provides little clear explanation of how "violations" may be committed, Forum 18 has found. Charges often result in lengthy court proceedings, and fines. In some cases, fines represent nearly two-thirds the average monthly wage and nearly twice the average monthly pension. These can place a heavy burden on the poor, elderly, and unemployed.

Charges are brought overwhelmingly against Jehovah's Witnesses, Forum 18 has found, although members of several other religious groups, including Baptist churches and the Chinese spiritual movement Falun Gong, have also been taken to court. Few defendants are acquitted, and appeals against convictions rarely succeed.

Based on Forum 18's analysis of available court verdicts, 119 individuals and three religious organisations are known to have been brought to court between January and December 2015 for exercising their right to freedom of religion and belief in public space (see case listing below). Prosecutions were brought under the Code of Administrative Offences' Article 20.2 ("Violation of the established procedure for organising or conducting a gathering, meeting, demonstration, procession or picket").

This represents a sharp increase on the 23 known prosecutions under Article 20.2 for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief in public in 2014 (see F18News 2 March 2015 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2044).

2015 Punishments

These prosecutions led to 80 fines, two short-term jailings, and one sentence of community service (before appeals). A further two individuals were convicted but not punished because of the "insignificance of the violation", according to court verdicts. Another court dismissed four prosecutions because the alleged offence did not fall under Article 20.2. Only 33 out of the 122 defendants were initially acquitted (before appeals).

Individuals or religious communities who wish to or whose beliefs require them to share the tenets of their faith in public, beyond the confines of a place of worship, are particularly vulnerable to prosecution under Administrative Code Article 20.2.

In 2015, Forum 18 found 83 prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses (including two communities); 9 of Baptists; 9 of Hare Krishna devotees; 6 of members of Falun Gong; 4 of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly known as Mormons) as part of the same case – which was dropped; 3 of Muslims; and 3 of Protestants. One individual was charged in connection with a Buddhist event. The religious affiliation of four defendants remains unknown.

Gender and geography of 2015 prosecutions

Of the 119 individuals known to have been prosecuted, 74 were women and 45 men.

Forum 18 found that prosecutions under Article 20.2 in 2015 took place in 38 of Russia's 83 regions (not counting Crimea and Sevastopol). The five regions which saw the highest numbers of cases were: Rostov (15), Primorye (11), Voronezh (8), North Ossetia-Alania (8), and Saratov (7).

In addition to the 122 prosecutions found by Forum 18, similar cases have been brought in Russian-annexed Crimea (see F18News 5 January 2016 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2137).

Article 20.2

Administrative Code Article 20.2 is linked to the Demonstrations Law and punishes the "violation of the established procedure for organising or conducting a gathering, meeting, demonstration, procession or picket". Its eight parts cover a variety of offences, but only Parts 1, 2, and 5 are known by Forum 18 to have been used against people who exercise freedom of religion or belief. These are also the most frequently used Parts in general (see Fom 18's general Russia religious freedom survey http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2171).

As well as individuals promoting their religious beliefs, members of public associations and political parties (such as Communists marking Lenin's birthday), political demonstrators, and individuals protesting against social problems (such as rising utility costs or the introduction of new road tolls for lorry drivers) may also face charges under Article 20.2.

In total, 2015 saw 468 prosecutions under Article 20.2 for all types of public event and activity, of which just over a quarter (122 cases, 26 per cent) were brought against individual religious believers and communities. The highest proportion of religious cases came under Part 2, Forum 18 found, with more than a third (73 out of 217, 34 per cent) of these prosecutions involving the exercise of freedom of religion and belief in public space.

Most of these Part 2 prosecutions (55 out of 73) are based on a law enforcement interpretation of much outdoor religious activity as "picketing" (deemed unlawful if carried out by more than one person without notifying the authorities). Jehovah's Witnesses, upon whom the burden of such cases principally falls, do not consider their actions to be picketing, but "religious service" and therefore do not think to inform the authorities.

In 2015, Forum 18 found 73 prosecutions for religious activities under Part 2, 35 under Part 5, and 14 under Part 1. These were derived from a total of 80 separate investigations (50 under Part 2, 21 under Part 5, and 9 under Part 1), of which four resulted in charges under both Parts 2 and 5.

Article 20.2 Parts 1, 2 and 5

Parts 1 and 5 of Article 20.2 ("Violation of the established procedure for organising or conducting a gathering, meeting, demonstration, procession or picket") cover general violations of the Article and complement each other. Part 1 focuses on organisers, Part 2 on other participants. Conviction under Parts 1 and 5 brings a fine of 10,000 to 20,000 Roubles or compulsory labour (community service) for up to 40 hours. Officials of organisations may also receive a fine of 15,000 to 30,000 Roubles under Part 1, and organisations themselves may be fined 50,000 to 100,000 Roubles (see Fom 18's general Russia religious freedom survey http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2171).

Part 2 specifically targets the organisation of events without formally notifying the authorities in advance. For individuals, this carries a fine of 20,000 to 30,000 Roubles, compulsory labour (community service) of up to 40 hours, or imprisonment for up to 10 days. Officials may be fined 20,000 to 40,000 Roubles, and organisations 70,000 to 100,000 Roubles (see Fom 18's general Russia religious freedom survey http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2171).

These are substantial fines when compared with the average monthly wage in Russia (33,347 Roubles in November 2015) and particularly the average monthly pension (12,400 Roubles in 2015). Many of those prosecuted under Article 20.2 are elderly Jehovah's Witnesses who can ill afford to pay what may be twice their monthly income. In such cases, other members of the community often contribute towards the fine, Jehovah's Witnesses told Forum 18. Judges sometimes acknowledge defendants' difficult financial position by reducing penalties for pensioners and the unemployed.

While the majority of convictions found by Forum 18 resulted in fines, two defendants were jailed and one was sentenced to community service.

Typical 2015 cases

Nikolai Kryukov and Dmitry Moskvichyov, Hare Krishna devotees, performed religious chants and handed out literature outside a shop in the centre of Magadan. Both were charged under Part 2 with holding a "group picket" without informing the authorities. They were detained for six days without an opportunity to organise proper legal support (see F18News 4 November 2015 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2117). Their three companions, Yevgeny Fedoreyev, Oleg Kim, and Vladimir Gerasimenko, were charged under Part 5 in their home regions and fined.

Jehovah's Witness V. Lubyagina was also convicted of holding an unlawful "group picket" for displaying literature on a stand at a town centre crossroads (her companion was not charged). Lubyagina was sentenced to 20 hours' "compulsory work" in light of her financial position, according to the verdict from Sovietsk City Court, Kaliningrad Region.

Prosecutions are usually initiated by the police and in some instances by prosecutors' offices. According to written verdicts, members of the public sometimes alert law enforcement officials to supposed "offences" upon seeing Jehovah's Witnesses or Baptists setting up literature stands in the street.

Other investigations are based on monitoring of "compliance with anti-extremism legislation" – if law enforcement agents find "extremist" literature, believers may also be taken to court under Article 20.29 ("Production or mass distribution of extremist materials") (see F18News 25 April 2016 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2171).

Jehovah's Witnesses Lyudmila Ponomarenko and N. Mironenko, for example, were fined at Prokhladnyy District Court in Kabardino-Balkariya for both unlawful "group picketing" and the distribution of "extremist literature" on the same day.

Confusion remains

Despite legal changes in 2012 and 2014 which give judges concrete grounds for dismissing cases in which police misapply the law, the situation remains confusing. In December 2012, responding to an appeal by two Jehovah's Witnesses, the Constitutional Court ruled that notification of an event need only be submitted if the authorities are required to provide health and safety measures (see F18News 15 August 2013 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1865). The Religion Law was amended in 2014 to clarify in which places religious events may be freely held (see F18News 17 September 2015 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2101).

Despite these legal changes, police and prosecutors persist in bringing charges against individuals for publicly exercising freedom of religion and belief, often on a very small scale (see F18News 22 February 2016 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2151).

Also, different judges apply these changes inconsistently. This can result in conviction in one court and acquittal in another for identical offences.

For example, in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Jehovah's Witnesses O. Kozlova and I. Parkhomuk were charged with unlawful picketing for standing with a literature stand outside a shop at the edge of a city square. Judge Nadezhda Tatun acquitted both of them at Central District Court on 16 December, citing the 2012 Constitutional Court ruling. V. Sharabanova and M. Zakhvatayeva, who also set up a stand with Jehovah's Witness literature at a bus station in Tulun in Irkutsk Region and were also charged with unlawful picketing, were convicted and each fined 20,000 Roubles (see F18News 22 February 2016 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2151).

Sometimes this inconsistency occurs even within the same case in the same court. Jehovah's Witnesses, O. Fioktistova and K. Tutinova, were charged with organising "a public religious event" aimed at the "popularisation of [Jehovah's Witness beliefs] among residents" without notifying the authorities in the city of Elista in the Kalmyk Republic. They too had displayed religious literature on a stand in a pedestrian zone. They were both tried under Article 20.2, Part 2, at Tulun City Court on the same day. While Judge Natalya Tsykalova acquitted Fioktistova, Judge Ilya Furmanov convicted Tutinova and fined her 20,000 Roubles (see F18News 4 November 2015 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2117).

In 2015, Forum 18 found six prosecutions (five for Jehovah's Witness events, one for a Protestant event) which should not have been initiated under the new amendments. All six involved religious services or meetings held in loaned or rented properties (a category added to the list of places where religious worship may be held without hindrance). All of the defendants were acquitted on the basis of the 2014 amendments.

The 2012 Constitutional Court ruling was invoked by Judge Natalya Mashkina of the Supreme Court of the Udmurt Republic when she overturned the 70,000 Rouble fine imposed on the Society for Krishna Consciousness of Izhevsk for holding an "unauthorised" procession. In her verdict, she ruled that the local administration had not shown that notification was required at all. The event's alleged organiser, Aleksandr Korepanov, had, however, already been convicted for the alleged violation in July 2015. This indicates that it is possible for both organisations and individual organisers to be charged for the same offence – and face different outcomes.

A clear discrepancy also exists between how religious adherents themselves view their public activity (as "meetings for worship or other religious purposes") and how law enforcement agencies perceive it (as "public events" on a par with political demonstrations, most often as picketing) (see F18News 22 February 2016 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2151).

Finally, legislation still does not explicitly address the conduct of public religious activities which are not "worship rites or ceremonies" (such as handing out religious literature or discussing beliefs in public places). This leaves a grey area of public space in which religious events are neither freely permitted nor expressly forbidden. This puts the onus on individuals themselves to determine whether or not it is necessary to notify the authorities of an event (see F18News 22 February 2016 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2151).

Lengthy proceedings and legal challenges from both sides

Seventy-eight of the 122 verdicts found by Forum 18 were challenged in higher courts, including 10 attempts by the prosecution to appeal against acquittals. Ten fines were overturned as a result, and seven of the challenged acquittals were upheld. Appeal judges also returned 6 cases to their original courts for re-examination (3 after appeals by the defence, 3 after appeals by the prosecution),

leading to 3 fresh convictions (after initial acquittals) and 2 eventual acquittals (after initial convictions).

With their potential for large fines, the likelihood that police or prosecutors will challenge acquittals, and the possibility that appeals at the regional/republic level will result in re-trials, cases under Administrative Code Article 20.2 place a heavy burden on defendants in terms of time, energy, and money – even if they are ultimately exonerated.

Defendants can become caught up in a cycle of appeals and re-trials for months on end. E. Rogachyov, a Baptist charged with "picketing" near a school in Rostov, endured some eight months of proceedings before losing his final appeal in January 2016. Rogachyov and two companions, N. Kirillov and L. Leyn, were originally acquitted by the city's Proletarian District Court in June 2015 (see F18News 4 November 2015 http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2117). However, the police challenged these rulings at Rostov Regional Court on the grounds that the district court had not taken into account the fact that the "picket" had been held near an educational institution. Kirillov's acquittal was upheld, but Leyn and Rogachyov (who faced a different appeal court judge) were sent for re-trial and found guilty on 7 August. Leyn appealed unsuccessfully on 8 October, while Rogachyov's case was again returned for re-examination at the lower court, where he was convicted again and fined 5,000 Roubles on 20 November.

CASE LISTING

Known 2015 Article 20.2, Part 1 Cases

1) 16 February

Name: Yelena Romanova

Fine: 5000 Roubles

Court: Frunze District Court, Saratov

Situation: charged with holding one-person picket without the "distinguishing sign of the organiser" of a public event; displayed Jehovah's Witness literature on a stand in the street

Appeal: unsuccessful – 29 April 2015, Saratov Regional Court

2) 3 March

Name: Valentina Brezgunova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Lenin District Court, Smolensk

Situation: charged with holding picket with less than 50 metres between participants; with one other Baptist, distributed religious literature from a table in a park and spoke to interested passers-by; judge concluded action was not a picket

Appeal: by police, unsuccessful – 5 May 2015, Smolensk Regional Court

3) 16 April

Name: A.N. Korolyov

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Industrial District Court, Smolensk

Situation: charged with violating procedure for picketing by standing less than 50 metres away from two other members of the Evangelical "Nehemiah" Church; defendant held placard saying "God exists" and was carrying church flyers; judge concludes that there is insufficient evidence

Appeal: by police, unsuccessful – 9 June 2015, Smolensk Regional Court

4) 22 May

Name: Antonina Kookuyeva

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Elista City Court, Kalmikiya

Situation: leader of local Society of Friends of Tibet charged with conducting a procession from the city's Buddha statue to a nearby temple and back again after a public prayer meeting (distance of less than 100 metres), not in accordance with submitted notification of event, which was for a prayer meeting only

Appeal: none

5) 20 October

Name: A.E. Baranov

Fine: 5000 Roubles

Court: Rtishchevo District Court, Saratov Region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with organising "picket" with T.V. Kutukova (see below) outside a shop, with the use of "visual agitation" and free religious literature on a stand, at which he wore no identifying sign as organiser and did not notify authorities; appeal judge concluded there was no evidence provided that Baranov was the organiser; mentions lack of notification but acknowledges that this falls under Part 2 and judge has no right to discuss it in this hearing

Appeal: successful – 12 January 2016, Saratov Regional Court

6) 21 October

Name: T.V. Kutukova

Fine: 5000 Roubles

Court: Rtishchevo District Court, Saratov Region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with organising "picket" with A.E. Baranov (see above) outside a shop, with the use of "visual agitation" and free religious literature on a stand, at which she wore no identifying sign as organiser and did not notify authorities; argued that she was "not the organiser of a picket, but a participant in religious service"

Appeal: successful – 12 January 2016, Saratov Regional Court

7) 26 October

Name: A.P. Chikunova (Bakhtarova)

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Saratov

Situation: charged with distributing "agitational material about Evangelical Christians Baptists" in Victory Square, ie. New Testament and Psalms, without notification (no mention of any other violation) – need for this stressed by citing previous rulings

Appeal: none

8) 27 October

Name: S.M. Pelmeneva

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Mirnyy District Court, Sakha Republic

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with violating the rules of a one-person picket by standing with another person (N.A. Gorbunova – see below) and not submitting notification; argued that it was not a picket, but "religious service" in the form of distribution of religious literature from trolley to interested passers-by

Appeal: unsuccessful – 9 February 2016, Supreme Court of the Sakha Republic

9) 27 October

Name: N.A. Gorbunova

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Mirnyy District Court, Sakha Republic

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with violating the rules of a one-person picket by standing with another person (S.M. Pelmeneva – see above) and not submitting notification; argued that it was not a picket, but "religious service" in the form of distribution of religious literature from trolley to interested passers-by

Appeal: unsuccessful – 9 February 2016, Supreme Court of the Sakha Republic

10) 9 November

Name: D.N. Faleytor

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Saratov

Situation: member of "Evangelical Christians – Baptists" charged with holding one-person picket without organiser's identifying sign; used "visual agitation" and free religious literature to inform passers-by of beliefs and church activities

Appeal: none

11) 19 November

Name: D.D. Foot

Fine: none – article not applicable

Court: Lenin District Court, Astrakhan

Situation: US citizen charged with organising Mormon gathering on university premises (hostel) – violated 2012 Education Law which bans the creation and activities of religious organisations in state and municipal educational institutions; lawyer argued that he did not, and that Administrative Code does not provide for punishment of those doing so; judge agrees that he violated law on religious organisations in educational institutions, but that this does not constitute a public event, so cannot fall under Article 20.2, Part 1

Appeal: none

12) 20 November

Name: S.K. Watterson

Fine: none – article not applicable

Court: Lenin District Court, Astrakhan

Situation: US Mormon, as above

Appeal: none

13) 20 November

Name: D.T. Ryde

Fine: none – article not applicable

Court: Lenin District Court, Astrakhan

Situation: US Mormon, as above

Appeal: none

14) 20 November

Name: R.N. Randall

Fine: none – article not applicable

Court: Lenin District Court, Astrakhan

Situation: US Mormon, as above

Appeal: none

Known 2015 Article 20.2, Part 2 Cases

1) 22 January

Name: Viktor Pechkurov

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Smolensk

Situation: with three fellow Baptists, distributed religious literature in a public garden as part of a "mobile Christian library service" and was charged with holding an unlawful "picket" with less than 50 metres between participants – judge concluded notification was necessary, despite defendant's argument that the event was not a picket; police alerted by anonymous caller warning of "sectarians" in the park

Appeal: successful – Smolensk Regional Court, 24 February 2015

2) 11 February

Name: A.V. Tushin

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Ivanovo

Situation: defendant charged with organising "group picket" of three people (no evidence of charges against other two) outside a shopping centre, using a wheeled stand displaying Jehovah's Witness literature; defendant claimed he was neither organiser nor participant, but had come across his fellow congregants by chance, and that "the dissemination of religious views by offering biblical literature with the aid of a wheeled stand does not correspond to the concept of a public event, and notification of authorities is not required"; police alerted by passer-by who had been given literature; the two women do not appear to have been charged

Appeal: unsuccessful – 9 April 2015, Ivanovo Regional Court

3) 18 February

Name: L.I. Asatryan

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Magadan City Court

Situation: defendant set up folding table with free religious literature in public garden – court interpreted this as picket, but judge concluded there was no evidence the defendant had organised and conducted the "event" together with another person ("Sh."), who denied participating

Appeal: by police, unsuccessful – 9 April 2015, Magadan Regional Court

4) 26 February

Name: Liliya Vorobyova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Teykovo District Court, Ivanovo Region

Situation: defendant charged with holding "street religious activity in the form of a public religious service" (with Kulikova – see below) at the entrance to a market and acquainting passers-by with Jehovah's Witness beliefs by means of "group picketing" with another woman, ie. displaying brochures and leaflets on an information stand ("visual agitation") – judge concludes that defendant was only conversing with fellow Jehovah's Witness in passing

Appeal: none

5) 10 March

Name: G.V. Kulikova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Teykovo District Court, Ivanovo Region

Situation: defendant charged with holding "street religious activity in the form of a public religious service" (with Vorobyova – see above) at the entrance to a market and acquainting passers-by with Jehovah's Witness beliefs by means of "group picketing" with another woman, ie. displaying brochures and leaflets on an information stand ("visual agitation")

Appeal: unsuccessful – 7 May 2015, Ivanovo Regional Court

6) 13 March

Name: T.M Khalina

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Birobidzhan District Court, Jewish Autonomous Region

Situation: charged with using an information stand in a pedestrian zone to distribute Jehovah's Witness literature, in a place "not intended for public religious events"; the defendant "openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place in which the mass presence of people is envisaged, and created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of the citizens there"

Appeal: successful – 22 April 2015, Court of the Jewish Autonomous Region; prosecutor's protest against overturning of verdict unsuccessful – 13 July 2015, Court of the Jewish Autonomous Region

7) 17 March

Name: G.V. Makarova

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Staraya Russa District Court, Novgorod Region

Situation: display of Jehovah's Witness literature on information stand with G.I. Maksimova (see below) interpreted as picket; sentenced to half of minimum fine on account of age and financial situation

Appeal: unsuccessful – 13 April 2015, Novgorod Regional Court

8) 17 March

Name: G.I. Maksimova

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Staraya Russa District Court, Novgorod Region

Situation: display of Jehovah's Witness literature on information stand with G.V. Makarova (see below) interpreted as picket; sentenced to half of minimum fine on account of age and financial situation

Appeal: unsuccessful – 13 April 2015, Novgorod Regional Court

9) 25 March

Name: Pavel Novikov

Fine: 20,000

Court: Railway District Court, Oryol

Situation: Evangelical Christian-Baptist charged with organising a public worship service, attended by about 30 people in a playground in the yard of a block of flats – claimed he was not the organiser but joined the event in passing, there was no violation of public order, and no citizens present were offended or complained; fellow Baptists testified in court that he was not the organiser, but that the event had taken place spontaneously – police officers (summoned by the janitor to a "conflict situation") testified otherwise

Appeal: unsuccessful – 24 April 2015, Oryol Regional Court

10) 25 March

Name: I.V. Zebreva

Fine: unknown

Court: Novocherkassk City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: charged with unlawful group picketing; witness claimed that, with another woman, the defendant stood outside a shopping centre offering Jehovah's Witness literature and invited him to a church service; defendant claimed that she had not pursued "any of the aims of a public event"; judge cites December 2012 Constitutional Court ruling but concludes that it does not apply to this case because the "event" was "conducted in a public place (the street)"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 18 May 2015, Rostov Regional Court

11) 27 March

Name: M.S. Churkina

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Railway District Court, Rostov-on-Don

Situation: with Yu. S. Svetlakova (see below), charged with unlawful "group picketing" for using information stand to display Jehovah's Witness literature in a pedestrian alleyway

Appeal: unsuccessful – 6 May 2015, Rostov Regional Court

12) 27 March

Name: Yu. S. Svetlakova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Railway District Court, Rostov-on-Don

Situation: with M.S. Churkina (see above), charged with unlawful "group picketing" for using information stand to display Jehovah's Witness literature in a pedestrian alleyway

Appeal: unsuccessful – 6 May 2015, Rostov Regional Court

13) 1 April

Name: I.I. Kolchyova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Soviet District Court, Krasnodar

Situation: charged with holding picket near a pedestrian underpass at crossroads for displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on a stand; judge concludes that there is no evidence that this constituted a picket

Appeal: none

14) 10 April

Name: Yevgeny Galitsky

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: October District Court, Orsk, Orenburg Region

Situation: held a Protestant gathering on the theme "Life after life. The secret of saving your soul" in accommodation rented for the purpose, at which "the free expression and formation of opinion on the question of the meaning of religion and the Lord God in human life" took place; judge concludes that this did not threaten national security or require health and safety measures

Appeal: none

15) 21 April

Name: B.V. Bezdenezhnykh

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Yoshkar-Ola City Court, Mari- El Republic

Situation: charged with "unsanctioned group picketing...aimed at the dissemination and popularisation of his beliefs among the population"; with fellow Jehovah's Witness Medvedkov (see below), defendant was sitting beside an information stand with religious literature

Appeal: reclassified to Part 5 and fine reduced to 10,000 Roubles – 22 June 2015, Supreme Court of the Mari-El Republic

16) 22 April

Name: A.S. Yevdokimova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Soviet District Court, Krasnodar

Situation: for distribution of Jehovah's Witness literature, charged with holding picket near pedestrian underpass at crossroads in Krasnodar; judge concludes that "in the case materials there is no evidence that the purpose of A.S. Yevdokimova's action was the formation of any kind of opinion or the making of demands on various political, economic, social and cultural issues in the country" and therefore it was not a picket

Appeal: none

17) 27 April

Name: A.G. Medvedkov

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Yoshkar-Ola City Court, Mari-El Republic

Situation: charged with "unsanctioned group picketing...aimed at the dissemination and popularisation of his beliefs among the population"; with fellow Jehovah's Witness, Bezdenezhnykh (see above), defendant was sitting beside an information stand with religious literature

Appeal: reclassified as Part 5 and fine reduced to 10,000 Roubles – 24 June 2015, Supreme Court of the Mari-El Republic

18) 27 April

Name: Ye. I. Tisenkov

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Gai City Court, Orenburg Region

Situation: charged with organising a public religious event – Jehovah's Witness "Evening of Remembrance of the Death of Christ" – in rented accommodation without notifying the authorities; judge cites December 2012 Constitutional Court ruling and concludes no notification required

Appeal: by prosecution, unsuccessful – 19 June 2015, Orenburg Regional Court

19) 8 May

Name: Jehovah's Witness community "South, Abakan"

Fine: 70,000

Court: Abakan City Court, Republic of Khakassiya

Situation: distribution of literature at bus stop outside station, "of a picket-like character; "to draw attention to particular issues of a religious nature, [they] publicly expressed opinions about the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses, with the use of visual aids: posters, banners, with inscriptions"; "openly demonstrating their religious beliefs in a place providing for the massive presence of people – created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of the citizens there"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 1 July, Supreme Court of the Khakassiya Republic

20) 13 May

Name: O.Sh. Tretyakova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: October District Court, Arkhangelsk

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with "group picketing" without notification for displaying religious literature on a stand in the street – accosted by police while speaking to acquaintance Golovenkin (see below); points out that "religious service" is not related to public events and requires no notice to be given; judge concludes that there is no evidence for a group picket

Appeal: none

21) 14 May

Name: A. Yu. Golovenkin

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: October District Court, Arkhangelsk

Situation: charged with "group picketing" without notification, but claims he only stopped in by chance on seeing his fellow Jehovah's Witness O.Sh. Tretyakova, who was displaying religious literature on a stand in the street; also points out that "religious service" is not related to public events and requires no notice to be given; judge concludes that defendant bore no responsibility for the "event"

Appeal: none

22) 20 May

Name: Z.U. Khamitzayeva

Fine: unknown

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladikavkaz, Judge Zaurbek Tsagolov

Situation: charged with unlawful "group picket" for distributing Jehovah's Witness literature from information stand at public transport stop – with S.N. Khuadonova (see below)

Appeal: successful – 25 June, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

23) 26 May

Name: A.V. Neyfeld

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Tomsk, Judge R.A. Zaynulin

Situation: charged with organising groups of 2-3 Baptists who handed out New Testaments and psalters to interested passers-by in New Cathedral Square in Tomsk; interpreted as pickets involving more than one person and fewer than 30 metres apart

Appeal: none

24) 1 June

Name: A.A. Aliyev

Fine: unknown

Court: Birobidzhan District Court, Jewish Autonomous Region

Situation: charged with organising Jehovah's Witness worship meeting in restaurant without notification

Appeal: successful – 17 July, Court of the Jewish Autonomous Region

25) 2 June

Name: S.N. Khuadonova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: charged with unlawful "group picket" for distributing Jehovah's Witness literature from information stand at public transport stop – with Z.U Khamitzayeva (see above)

Appeal: unsuccessful, 23 July, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

26) 2 June

Name: A.G. Avakimova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: charged with distributing Jehovah's Witness literature with M.N. Meladze (see below), from information stand at public transport stop; interpreted as picket

Appeal: unsuccessful, 23 July, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

27) 4 June

Name: M.N. Meladze

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: charged with unlawful "group picket" for distributing Jehovah's Witness literature from information stand at public transport stop (with A.G. Avakimova – see above)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 23 July 2015, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

28) 5 June

Name: N.V. Morozova

Fine: unknown amount

Court: Volgodonsk District Court, Rostov Region

Situation: with T.N. Lyashenko (see below), used two wheeled information stands to display Jehovah's Witness literature in a public garden outside a hotel; interpreted as picket despite lawyer's arguments to the contrary (no "object" being picketed, no relation between message and "object"); local resident called prosecutor's office with an anonymous tip-off

Appeal: unsuccessful – 27 July, Rostov Regional Court

29) 8 June

Name: T.N. Lyashenko

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Volgodonsk District Court, Rostov Region

Situation: with N.V. Morozova (see above), used two wheeled information stands to display Jehovah's Witness literature in a public garden outside a hotel; interpreted as picket despite lawyer's arguments to the contrary (no "object" being picketed, no relation between message and "object"); local resident called prosecutor's office with an anonymous tip-off

Appeal: case returned for re-examination because fine imposed not allowed under Part 2 – 14 July 2015, Rostov Regional Court; defendant convicted again on retrial and fined 20,000 Roubles – 29 July 2015, Volgodonsk District Court; subsequent appeal unsuccessful – 28 September 2015

30) 8 June

Name: D. D. Tissen

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Tashla District Court, Orenburg region, Judge Ye. G. Porotko

Situation: group of seven German citizens with "an non-traditional doctrine of God" sang hymns, gave sermons, read poetry and handed out literature outside mobile phone shop after registering at local migration office; purpose of visit was to proselytise; Tissen had helped them with their documents but was not a member of the group; judge concluded that actions did not constitute a demonstration

Appeal: none

31) 24 June

Name: Administrative Centre of Jehovah's Witnesses

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Factory District Court, Oryol, Judge Yelena Yendovitskaya

Situation: held service for 2100 people in rented accommodation at shopping and leisure centre; event held on yearly basis with no threat to public order; judge acknowledges 2012 Constitutional Court ruling and October 2014 amendments in deciding the event required no notification

Appeal: none

32) 29 June

Name: S.L. Yerkin

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Magadan City Court

Situation: held Jehovah's Witness event "Evening of Remembrance of the Death of Jesus Christ" in non-residential property with no notification; did not identify himself visibly as organiser; argued that event did not inconvenience local population as was held indoors in non-residential property; judge acknowledges 2012 Constitutional Court ruling and October 2014 amendments

Appeal: by police, unsuccessfully; 6 August, Magadan Regional Court

33) 1 July

Name: K.O. Tutinova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Elista City Court, Kalmykiya

Situation: with Fioktistova (see below), held a "public worship service" aimed at the popularisation of Jehovah's Witness beliefs using an information stand to display religious literature in a pedestrian zone; police took both women and four passers-by for questioning at police station; defendant "demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place in which, considering the mass presence of people, she created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of citizens"

Appeal: successful – 4 August, Supreme Court of Kalmykiya

34) 1 July

Name: O.A. Fioktistova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Elista City Court, Kalmykiya

Situation: with Tutinova (see above), Jehovah's Witness charged with organising "public worship", "as well as actions to inform the public and passers-by of features of the faith...using a metal luggage cart equipped with a stand"; defendant claimed that she was simply offering literature and answering questions from interested passers-by, not holding a public event; judge acknowledges 2012 Constitutional Court ruling: "The mere fact that O.A. Fioktistova was spreading her religious beliefs by offering free non-prohibited Bible literature...by purpose, form and procedure does not correspond to the concept of a public event"

Appeal: by local Justice Ministry department, unsuccessful – 4 August, Supreme Court of Republic of Kalmykiya

35) 8 July

Name: Aleksandr Korepanov

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Mozhga District Court, Udmurtiya

Situation: charged with organising a Society for Krishna Consciousness procession without notification (same incident as 9 November case below); defendant claimed he was not the organiser and that the procession was a "simultaneous mass movement of citizens in a public place", not a "public event", as it consisted of the chanting of mantras and Indian dance, not expression of political/social opinions or demands

Appeal: none

36) 10 July

Name: O.A. Bokova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Ryazan

Situation: with fellow Jehovah's Witness T.V. Son, charged with holding a "picket" at a public transport stop, ie. used information stand to display brochures; defendant argued that since her actions did not constitute a public event she was not obliged to inform the authorities; judge concluded that she "openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place in which the mass presence of people is envisaged, by which she created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of the citizens there"

Appeal: unsuccessful, but reclassified to Part 5 and fine reduced to 5000 Roubles, 6 August, Ryazan Regional Court

37) 9 July

Name: T.V. Son

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Ryazan

Situation: with fellow Jehovah's Witness O.A. Bokova, charged with holding a "picket" at a public transport stop, ie. used information stand to display brochures; defendant argued that since her actions did not constitute a public event she was not obliged to inform the authorities; judge concluded she "openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place in which the mass presence of people is envisaged, by which she created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of the citizens there"

Appeal: unsuccessful, but reclassified to Part 5 and fine reduced to 5000 Roubles – 27 August 2015, Ryazan Regional Court

38) 24 July

Name: T.V. Ganzha

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Industrial District Court, Perm, Judge Aleksandr Basev

Situation: charged with organising "picket" without notification, ie. distribution of Jehovah's Witness literature with a companion (Olga Belokon – see Part 5 list), "in a public place not for public religious activities, at an underpass – that is, openly demonstrating their religious beliefs in a place providing for the massive presence of people – created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of the citizens there"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 2 September, Perm Regional Court, Judge Viktor Nyashin

39) 3 August

Name: Dmitry Moskvichyov

Fine: none – 6 days' detention

Court: Magadan City Court

Situation: charged (with Kryukov – see below) with organising a "group picket" of five people outside a city centre shop – they performed religious chants, played Indian instruments, and handed out Society for Krishna Consciousness literature to passers-by

Appeal: none

40) 3 August

Name: Nikolai Kryukov

Fine: none – 6 days' detention

Court: Magadan City Court

Situation: charged (with Moskvichyov – see above) with organising a "group picket" of five people outside a city centre shop – they performed religious chants, played Indian instruments, and handed out Society for Krishna Consciousness literature to passers-by

Appeal: none

41) 11 August

Name: A.A. Aliyev, chair of Jehovah's Witnesses of Birobidzhan

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Birobidzhan District Court, Jewish Autonomous Region

Situation: organised public worship service at "Builder" sports complex in city park without notification; Aliyev denied being the organiser, but also pointed out that the event presented no danger to public order or health and safety as it took place in closed premises rented for the purpose; member of the public reported unattended bag to police and security forces and firefighters were called; judge cites amendment of 22 October 2014 and 2012 Constitutional Court ruling and concludes that no offence was committed

Appeal: none

42) 17 August

Name: S.M. Kiselyova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Khamovnichesky District Court, Moscow

Situation: charged with organising unlawful "group picket" of Falun Gong adherents, protesting against persecution of Falun Gong in China; defendant claimed that her acquaintance had passed by chance and only helped her put up a banner

Appeal: unsuccessful – 8 October 2015, Moscow City Court

43) 18 August

Name: Ahmed Tahrir Hefdi

Fine: none – on account of insignificance of the offence

Court: Central District Court, Voronezh

Situation: held public worship service (Islamic namaz) involving 35 people without notifying the authorities – defendant explained

that hall of residence where they usually prayed was undergoing cleaning, and argued that prayers had taken place behind a cafe in an otherwise deserted spot, disturbing nobody – found guilty but not fined because of repentance and minor nature of the offence

Appeal: none

44) 18 August

Name: Wamid Tahrir Hefdi

Fine: none – on account of insignificance of the offence

Court: Central District Court, Voronezh

Situation: held public worship service (Islamic namaz) involving 35 people without notifying the authorities – defendant explained that hall of residence where they usually prayed was undergoing cleaning, and argued that prayers had taken place behind a cafe in an otherwise deserted spot, disturbing nobody – found guilty but not fined because of repentance and minor nature of the offence

Appeal: none

45) 18 August

Name: M.T. Popov

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: October District Court, Rostov-on-Don

Situation: charged with organising unlawful "group picket" with amplification equipment, "religious paraphernalia" and the distribution of religious literature; involved 15 people from the Don Society for Krishna Consciousness

Appeal: unsuccessful – 7 October, Rostov Regional Court

46) 24 August

Name: N.V. Lai

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladivostok

Situation: Falun Gong adherent conducted single-person picket at submarine memorial (in separate incident from those below) using amplification equipment and Chinese-language placards; judge held that she should have submitted notification – appeal judge rules that notification was not required, but use of amplification was unlawful

Appeal: reclassified as Part 1 and fine reduced, Primorye Regional Court; supervisory appeal submitted to Primorye Regional Court on 19 April 2016 – no hearing date set

47) 24 August

Name: N.V. Lai

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladivostok

Situation: Falun Gong adherent charged with holding unlawful "group picket" at submarine memorial "with the use of visual agitation, leaflets, megaphones, and placards in a foreign language" to inform Chinese tourists of the persecution of the Falun Gong movement in China; defendant claimed she thought notification was unnecessary because materials were in Chinese and she and her companion (R.A. Kan – see below) were standing separately – judge concluded that use of amplification was also a violation of the Demonstrations Law

Appeal: unsuccessful – Primorye Regional Court; supervisory appeal submitted to Primorye Regional Court on 19 April 2016 – no hearing date set

48) 24 August

Name: R.A. Kan

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Lenin District Court, Vladivostok

Situation: Falun Gong adherent charged with holding unlawful "group picket" at submarine memorial "with the use of visual agitation, leaflets, megaphones, and placards in a foreign language" to inform Chinese tourists of the persecution of the Falun Gong movement in China; defendant claimed she thought notification was unnecessary because materials were in Chinese and she and her companion (N.V. Lai – see above) were standing separately – judge concluded that use of amplification was also a violation of the Demonstrations Law

Appeal: unsuccessful, but fine reduced to 10,000 Roubles, Primorye Regional Court; supervisory appeal submitted to Primorye Regional Court on 19 April 2016 – no hearing date set

49) 27 August

Name: T.I. Gogoleva

Fine: unknown

Court: Lenin District Court, Voronezh

Situation: charged with holding an unlawful "group picket" (with K.V. Lukina – see below) for using information stand to display Jehovah's Witness literature "in a public place"

Appeal: unsuccessful, but reclassified to Part 5 and fine reduced to unknown amount – 21 October 2015, Voronezh Regional Court

50) 27 August

Name: K.V. Lukina

Fine: unknown

Court: Lenin District Court, Voronezh

Situation: charged with holding an unlawful "group picket" (with T.I. Gogoleva – see above) for using information stand to display Jehovah's Witness literature "in a public place"

Appeal: unsuccessful, but reclassified to Part 5 and fine reduced to unknown amount – 21 October 2015, Voronezh Regional Court

51) 3 September

Name: L.A. Chernova

Fine: 10,000

Court: Central District Court, Voronezh

Situation: charged with holding unlawful "group picket" with fellow Jehovah's Witness (A.A. Yagodnitsina – see below), ie. used information stand to display free religious literature, "in a public place, not intended for public religious events"; defendant "openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place, where the mass presence of people may be envisaged, thereby creating a risk of disturbance to public order associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of citizens"

Appeal: unsuccessful but reclassified from Part 2 to Part 5 and fine reduced to 5000 Roubles – 3 November 2015, Voronezh Regional Court

52) 8 September

Name: A.V. Dryannikh

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Kirov District Court, Krasnoyarsk

Situation: with G.N. Konina (who was not charged), distributed Jehovah's Witness literature and CDs from stand at bus stop – interpreted by police as unsanctioned picket; judge concluded that "There are no evidence in the materials of the case that A.V. Dryannikh conducted a public event, that is, expressed and formed opinions or made demands on various issues of political, economic, social and cultural life of the country or foreign policy issues, within the scope of the Demonstrations Law"

Appeal: none

53) 14 September

Name: G.D. Malyukova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Syzran City Court, Samara region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness (with T.D. Artyukhina – see below), distributed free religious literature from wheeled stand – did not seek "permission" because it was not a picket; judge concluded that "Since the purpose of picketing, within the meaning of the law, is to draw attention to the picketed object, or to a particular problem, the actions of citizen Malyukova .. trying to attract the attention of the public by means of visual agitation, are a public event - a picket"

Appeal: reclassified as Part 5 and fine reduced to 10,000 Roubles – 8 December, Samara Regional Court

54) 17 September

Name: S.A. Lashko

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Kuibyshev District Court, Omsk

Situation: with fellow Jehovah's Witness I.V. Korobelnikova (see below), used an information stand to display religious literature at a city centre bus stop and answered questions from passers-by; judge interpreted this as an unlawful "group picket"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 13 October, Omsk Regional Court; unsuccessful supervisory appeal – 26 January 2016, Omsk Regional Court

55) 21 September

Name: G.N. Kalasheva

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Kominternovskiy District Court, Voronezh

Situation: Jehovah's Witness "expressed her opinion...using an information stand with the inscriptions 'What does the Bible teach?' and 'Take for free, read in your own language'" and handed out literature and answered questions from passers-by – interpreted as picket; judge concludes that Fedosov was alone and therefore not breaking the law (though police claimed she was with Lyudmila Dolgova – see below)

Appeal: by anti-extremism police, unsuccessful – 11 November, Voronezh Regional Court

56) 21 September

Name: Lyudmila Dolgova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Kominternovskiy District Court, Voronezh

Situation: Jehovah's Witness "expressed her opinion...using an information stand with the inscriptions 'What does the Bible teach?' and 'Take for free, read in your own language'" and handed out literature and answered questions from passers-by – interpreted as picket; judge concludes that Dolgova was alone and therefore not breaking the law (though police claimed she was with G.N. Kalasheva – see above)

Appeal: anti-extremism police appeal unsuccessful – 11 November, Voronezh Regional Court

57) 23 September

Name: T.D. Artyukhina

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Syzran City Court, Samara region, Judge E.N. Kosmina

Situation: Jehovah's Witness (with G.D. Malyukova – see above) distributed free religious literature from wheeled stand – did not seek "permission" because it was not a picket; judge concluded that "Since the purpose of picketing, within the meaning of the law, is to draw attention to the picketed object, or to a particular problem, the actions of citizen Artyukhina...trying to attract the attention of the public by means of visual agitation, are a public event - a picket"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 24 November, Samara Regional Court

58) 23 September

Name: M.V. Zakhvatayeva

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Tulun City Court, Irkutsk region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness (with V.V. Sharabanova – see below), set up information stand with religious literature and slogan "Is the end of suffering coming?" at bus station; defendant asked to have the hearing postponed in order to arrange legal assistance and because she felt unwell, since she was still in shock – this was refused as court considered enough time had been available, from 8pm on 22 September to 2pm on 23 September; judge concluded that "Since the purpose of picketing, within the meaning of the law, is to draw attention to the picketed object, or to a particular problem, M.V. Zakhvatayeva's actions, trying to attract the attention of the public by means of visual agitation, are public event - a picket"; and that "the open demonstration of religious beliefs may annoy or give offense to those who profess a different religion or no religion, and if taking place outwith religious buildings or structures or specially designated places or premises, certain religious activities, by virtue of their mass nature – may prevent the normal operation of transport or public or non-governmental organizations"; "picket" held in an area of "intensive movement of pedestrians and traffic, which created danger to public order"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 18 November, Irkutsk Regional Court

59) 24 September

Name: V.V. Sharabanova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Tulun City Court, Irkutsk Region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with holding an unlawful "group picket" by displaying literature on a stand at a bus station (with M.V. Zakhvatayeva – see above)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 18 November, Irkutsk Regional Court

60) 24 September

Name: A.A. Yagodnitsina

Fine: 10,000

Court: Central District Court, Voronezh

Situation: charged with holding unlawful "group picket" with fellow Jehovah's Witness (L.A. Chernova – see above), ie. used information stand to display free religious literature, "in a public place, not intended for public religious events"; defendant "openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place, where the mass presence of people may be envisaged, thereby creating a risk of disturbance to public order associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of citizens"

Appeal: unsuccessful but reclassified from Part 2 to Part 5, 17 November – Voronezh Regional Court

61) 12 October

Name: I.V. Korobelnikova

Fine: none – acquitted (but convicted and fined 20,000 Roubles on retrial – see below)

Court: Kuibyshev District Court, Omsk

Situation: with fellow Jehovah's Witness S.A. Lashko (see above), used an information stand to display religious literature at a city centre bus stop and answered questions from passers-by; original judge (different from Lashko's) concluded that this constituted a "religious service" and thus did not require notification – retrial judge interpreted defendant's actions as an unlawful "group picket", as she "expressed her opinion with an information stand, upon which were placed religious pamphlets, ie. openly showed her religious beliefs in a place at which the mass presence of a wide range of people may be envisaged, which requires proper supervision by the public authorities...since, under certain circumstances, regardless of the intentions of organisers and participants, the potential risk of disturbance of public order, and, consequently, damage to the moral and physical health of citizens cannot be ruled out"

Appeal: police appeal against acquittal successful; case sent for re-examination – 10 November 2015, Omsk Regional Court; defendant convicted on re-trial – 4 December 2015, Kuibyshev District Court; defendant's subsequent appeal unsuccessful – 29 December 2015, Omsk Regional Court

62) 13 October

Name: R. S-E. Khaduyev, Sakhalinsk Community of Muslims

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk City Court, Sakhalin

Situation: charged with organising a public religious service, involving 120 people, without notifying the authorities; according to police, this presented "the possibility of danger to public order, morality and health, both for the participants in religious activities, as well as third parties, requiring public authorities take measures to ensure public order, public safety and tranquility"; judge concluded that the absence of a clear description of the offence in the police report violated the accused's right to a defence

Appeal: none

63) 19 October

Name: Guzel(?) Abliskanova

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Berezovsky District Court, Krasnoyarsk Region

Situation: charged with organising an unlawful picket at a railway crossing by unspecified church group, using the slogan "Be good to people"; event involved five people (about ten were invited by SMS); defendant claimed she did not know notification was necessary; judge reduced fine because of defendant's character, remorse, and financial position; also absence of negative consequences)

Appeal: none

64) 23 October

Name: A.E. Kalashnikov

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Kameshkovo District Court, Vladimir region

Situation: rented local House of Culture for Jehovah's Witness service; judge concluded that "The need to notify the competent public authorities or local authorities of such public religious activities and carry out other encumbrances established by legislation, by reason of the mere fact that the meeting is occurring outside places designated for the purpose, is illegal interference of the state in the sphere of freedom of conscience" – and cites October 2014 amendment to Religion Law on the free conduct of religious ceremonies in premises rented for the purpose, and December 2012 Constitutional Court ruling

Appeal: none

65) 9 November

Name: Society for Krishna Consciousness of Izhevsk

Fine: 70,000

Court: Mozhga District Court, Udmurt Republic

Situation: Society for Krishna Consciousness charged with holding a procession without notification of the authorities (they had submitted notification only for Indian dance and singing with minimal amplification); case originally heard on 5 August at Industrial District Court, Izhevsk – this was overturned on 7 October by the Supreme Court of the Udmurt Republic for jurisdictional regions and sent for examination by a different court; alleged organiser Aleksandr Korepanov already convicted on 8 July (see above)

Appeal: successful – 8 February 2016, Supreme Court of the Udmurt Republic

66) 9 November

Name: V.V. Lubyagina

Fine: 20 hours' community service

Court: Sovietsk City Court, Kaliningrad Region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness; organised "street religious activity" with one other person (who was not charged) at a crossroads, using stand with religious literature; interpreted as group picket without notification

Appeal: unsuccessful – 24 December, Kaliningrad Regional Court

67) 12 November

Name: V.Ya. Shestakova

Fine: 20,000 Roubles

Court: Gukovo City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: with three fellow Jehovah's Witnesses (P.A. Petrova, A.I. Osychenko, L.V. Bosova – no evidence of charges against these people) used information stand to distribute literature in public place, interpreted as "group picket"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 27 January 2016, Rostov Regional Court

68) 23 November

Name: S.V. Safiyulin

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Central District Court, Tolyatti, Samara Region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness accused of holding unsanctioned picket for handing out literature from information stand and

answering questions from passers-by; judge concludes this does not qualify as a public event under the definitions provided in law

Appeal: none

69) 8 December

Name: L.V. Klimenko

Fine: 10,000 Roubles (reduced because first-time offence and "given the nature and degree of public danger of the offence committed")

Court: Shakhty City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: as part of anti-extremism monitoring, two Jehovah's Witnesses charged with holding unlawful "group picket" for distributing literature from information stand outside park entrance; defendant claimed that she was photographed with L.G. Suleva (see below) only by chance as they spoke in passing, standing opposite each other – defendant had another stand on the opposite side of the street

Appeal: unsuccessful, 23 March 2016, Rostov Regional Court

70) 8 December

Name: L.G. Suleva

Fine: 10,000 Roubles (reduced because first-time offence and "given the nature and degree of public danger of the offence committed")

Court: Shakhty City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: as part of anti-extremism monitoring, two Jehovah's Witnesses charged with holding unsanctioned picket for distributing literature from information stand outside park entrance; defendant claimed she was there alone and was photographed with L.V. Klimenko only by chance as they spoke in passing, standing opposite each other – Klimenko had another stand on the opposite side of the street; Suleva's claim that she gave evidence to prosecutors under pressure deemed "far-fetched and unfounded", and the fact that she refused to sign her statements deemed not to invalidate their contents, as she made them in the presence of witnesses

Appeal: unsuccessful, 15 March 2016, Rostov Regional Court

71) 16 December

Name: O.V. Kozlova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Central District Court, Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Khabarovsk Region

Situation: charged with holding unlawful "group picket" outside shop with fellow Jehovah's Witnesses (I.V. Parkhomuk – see below), "the purpose of which was the formation of opinion and expression of religious orientation" with use of "graphic materials"; defendant claimed they answered questions from passers-by who approached of their own accord and caused no disturbance of public order or blocking of right of way; detained by police after a woman photographed them; judge concluded that "The need to notify the competent public authorities of such public religious activities and carry out other obligations established by legislation, on the strength of the mere fact that the meeting is occurring outside places designated for the purpose, is illegal interference of the state in the sphere of freedom of conscience"; judge refers to December 2012 Constitutional Court ruling

Appeal: none

72) 16 December

Name: I.V. Parkhomuk

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Central District Court, Komsomolsk-on-Amur

Situation: Situation: charged with holding unlawful "group picket" outside shop with fellow Jehovah's Witnesses (O.V. Kozlova – see above), "the purpose of which was the formation of opinion and expression of religious orientation" with use of "graphic materials"; defendant claimed they answered questions from passers-by who approached of their own accord and caused no disturbance of public order or blocking of right of way; detained by police after a woman photographed them; judge concluded that "The need to notify the competent public authorities of such public religious activities and carry out other obligations established by legislation, on the strength of the mere fact that the meeting is occurring outside places designated for the purpose, is illegal interference of the state in the sphere of freedom of conscience"; judge refers to December 2012 Constitutional Court ruling

Appeal: none

73) 25 December

Name: M.V. Chernyshova

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Zelenogradsk District Court, Kaliningrad Region

Situation: Jehovah's Witness charged with holding picket without notification at bus stop, distributing free literature from information stand, and explaining beliefs to interested passers-by; judge rules that a single-person picket does not require notification and that such an activity does not require safety measures, therefore no notification necessary

Appeal: none

Known 2015 Article 20.2, Part 5 Cases

1) 25 February

Name: A.L. Redkov

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Serpukhov City Court, Moscow Region

Situation: charged with "picketing to express an opinion on the Bible" with information stand displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on pedestrian bridge outside station; judge concluded that neither the content nor the location of the action constituted a threat to public safety

Appeal: none

2) 5 March

Name: A.E. Chermnykh

Fine: 15,000 Roubles

Court: Ussuriysk District Court, Primorye

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful picket (with G.R. Sokolova – see below), ie. displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on an information stand at a crossroads

Appeal: unsuccessful – 18 May 2015, Primorye Regional Court

3) 5 March

Name: G.R. Sokolova

Fine: 15,000 Roubles

Court: Ussuriysk District Court, Primorye

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful "group picket" (with A.E. Chermnykh – see above), ie. displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on an information stand at a crossroads

Appeal: unsuccessful – 28 April 2015, Primorye Regional Court

4) 25 March

Name: O.G. Gorshkova

Fine: unknown

Court: Novocherkassk City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: charged with participation in an "unsanctioned public event" with fellow Jehovah's Witness I.V. Zebreva (see Part 2 list), ie. used information stand to display free religious literature in the street); judge mentions 2012 Constitutional Court ruling but concludes it has no bearing on the incident

Appeal: unsuccessful – 18 May 2015, Rostov Regional Court

5) 12 May

Name: L.G. Suleva

Fine: 10,000 Roubles – but acquitted at re-trial (see below)

Court: Shakhta City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: charged with unlawful "group picketing" for displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on a stand outside a park entrance on a pedestrianised street (with L.V. Klimenko – see below); investigated by prosecutors initially under Extremism Law as brochures bore the blocked jw.org website address

Appeal: case returned for re-examination – 14 July 2015, Rostov Regional Court; defendant acquitted at re-trial – 27 August 2015, Shakhta City Court

6) 12 May

Name: L.V. Klimenko

Fine: 10,000 Roubles – but acquitted at re-trial (see below)

Court: Shakhta City Court, Rostov Region

Situation: charged with unlawful "group picketing" for displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on a stand outside a park entrance on a pedestrianised street (with L.G. Suleva – see above); investigated by prosecutors initially under Extremism Law as brochures bore the blocked jw.org website address

Appeal: case returned for re-examination – 14 July 2015, Rostov Regional Court; defendant acquitted at re-trial – 27 August 2015, Shakhta City Court

7) 18 May

Name: A.I. Biganova

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: together with three others (Abayeva, Tsamakayev, Iluridze – see below), had Jehovah's Witness literature on moveable stand and answered questions from passers-by, opposite entrance of "Vladikavkaz" hotel; interpreted as picket

Appeal: unsuccessful – 2 September, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

8) 20 May

Name: Z.N. Abayeva

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: together with three others (Biganova, Tsamakayev, Iluridze – see above and below), had Jehovah's Witness literature on moveable stand and answered questions from passers-by, opposite entrance of "Vladikavkaz" hotel; interpreted as picket

Appeal: unsuccessful – 2 September, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

9) 2 June

Name: R. Kh. Tsamakayev

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: together with three others (Biganova, Abayeva, Iluridze – see above and below), had Jehovah's Witness literature on moveable stand and answered questions from passers-by, opposite entrance of "Vladikavkaz" hotel; interpreted as picket

Appeal: unsuccessful – 24 July, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

10) 8 June

Name: N.V. Kirillov

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Proletarian District Court, Rostov-on-Don

Situation: one of three Baptists (see Rogachyov and Leyn, below) "preaching the teachings of Jesus Christ with the use of visual aids, namely religious publications distributed free of charge"; interpreted by police as picket, but not by district court judge

Appeal: by police, unsuccessful – 14 July, Rostov Regional Court

11) 9 June

Name: L.N. Leyn

Fine: none – acquitted (but convicted and fined unknown amount at re-trial – see below)

Court: Proletarian District Court, Rostov-on-Don

Situation: charged with unlawful picketing with two fellow Baptists (see Rogachyov and Kirillov), "preaching the teachings of Jesus Christ with the use of visual aids, namely religious publications distributed free of charge" in the vicinity of a school, in violation of the Demonstrations Law; original judge ruled this was not a picket – retrial judge upheld police claim

Appeal: police appeal against acquittal – successful; case sent for re-examination, 22 July 2015, Rostov Regional Court; defendant convicted on re-trial, 7 August 2015, Proletarian District Court; defendant's subsequent appeal unsuccessful – 8 October 2015, Rostov Regional Court

12) 9 June

Name: E.A. Rogachyov

Fine: none – acquitted (but convicted and fined 5000 Roubles after re-trials – see below)

Court: Proletarian District Court, Rostov-on-Don

Situation: charged with unlawful picketing with two fellow Baptists (Leyn and Kirillov – see above), "preaching the teachings of Jesus Christ with the use of visual aids, namely religious publications distributed free of charge" in the vicinity of a school, in violation of the Demonstrations Law; original judge ruled this was not a picket – retrial judges upheld police claim

Appeal: police appeal against acquittal – successful; case sent for re-examination, 22 July 2015, Rostov Regional Court; defendant convicted on re-trial – 7 August 2015, Proletarian District Court; at defendant's subsequent appeal, case again sent for re-examination – 20 October 2015, Rostov Regional Court; defendant convicted again at second re-trial – 20 November 2015; defendant's subsequent appeal unsuccessful – 26 January 2016, Rostov Regional Court

13) 15 June

Name: Artyom Chumbayev

Fine: 15,000

Court: Ussuriysk District Court, Primorye

Situation: charged with participating in an unlawful "group picket" of three Society for Krishna Consciousness adherents (no evidence of charges against others) distributing religious literature from a stand at a crossroads with a sign reading "Hare Krishna"

Appeal: none

14) 16 June

Name: A.D. Iluridze

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Soviet District Court, Vladikavkaz

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful "group picket" for displaying Jehovah's Witness literature on moveable stand and answering questions from passers-by, opposite entrance of "Vladikavkaz" hotel, together with three others (Biganova, Abayeva, Tsamakayev – see above)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 23 July, Supreme Court of North Ossetia-Alania

15) 26 June

Name: O.D. Kudyasheva

Fine: 5000

Court: Lenin District Court, Kirov

Situation: took part in distribution of Jehovah's Witness literature from information stand on pavement at crossroads; interpreted as picket involving more than one person; approached and recorded by plainclothes officer after call from member of the public; with G.A. Klabukova (see below)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 13 August, Kirov Regional Court

16) 26 June

Name: G.A. Klabukova

Fine: 3000

Court: Lenin District Court, Kirov

Situation: took part in distribution of Jehovah's Witness literature from information stand on pavement at crossroads, with O.D. Kudyasheva (see above); interpreted as picket involving more than one person; approached and recorded by plainclothes officer after call from member of the public; "Klabukova openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place in which the mass presence of people may be envisaged – that is, in conditions which require the adoption of measures to ensure public order and the security of the participants of the religious activities and other citizens; there was a danger of disruption of public order, associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of citizens"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 13 August, Kirov Regional Court

17) 10 July

Name: V.G. Khimich

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Ussuriysk District Court, Primorye

Situation: distributing Jehovah's Witness literature outside mini-market from stand marked "Would you like to study the Bible?"; interpreted as picket – but judge concluded that it was a one-person picket which does not require notification; originally found guilty in magistrate's court No. 66 – verdict overturned at district court on 8 July and sent for examination at district level

Appeal: none

18) 27 July

Name: Olga Belokon

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Industrial District Court, Perm

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful "group picket", ie. distribution of Jehovah's Witness literature with a companion (T.V. Ganzha – see Part 2 list), "in a public place not for public religious activities, at an underpass – that is, openly demonstrating their religious beliefs in a place in which the mass presence of people may be envisaged, creating the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of citizens"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 10 September, Perm Regional Court

19) 17 August

Name: T.V. Dubenets

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Khamovnichesky District Court, Moscow

Situation: charged with participating in Falun Gong "group picket" protesting against persecution of the movement's adherents in China – defendant's claim that he came upon an acquaintance by chance and only helped her put up a banner, before practising Qigong nearby, was not accepted by court (see S.M. Kiselyova, 17 August, Part 2 list)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 8 October 2015, Moscow City Court

20) 31 August

Name: N.V. Lai

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Frunze District Court, Vladivostok

Situation: charged with disturbing public order and disturbing passers-by including Chinese consular staff by gesticulating and shouting – held placard with Chinese script and handed out leaflets about the Falun Gong spiritual movement; judge concluded that this did not violate the established procedure for a one-person picket

Appeal: none

21) 8 September

Name: O.N. Nesterenko

Fine: none – acquitted

Court: Ussuriysk District Court, Primorye

Situation: Jehovah's Witness; picket; information stand with religious literature "in the presence of passing citizens"; judge concludes that since she was alone, there was no violation

Appeal: none

22) 17 September

Name: A.A. Karatygin

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Krasnoarmeysk City Court, Saratov Region

Situation: with Mezhenikov (see below), charged with participating in unlawful "group picket" in Lenin Street, telling passers-by about Jehovah's Witness beliefs, using "visual agitation", ie. information stand with free religious literature

Appeal: successful – 25 November, Saratov Regional Court

23) 21 September

Name: M.N. Mezhenikov

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Krasnoarmeysk City Court, Saratov Region

Situation: with Karatygin (see above), charged with participating in unlawful "group picket" in Lenin Street, telling passers-by about Jehovah's Witness beliefs, using "visual agitation", ie. information stand with free religious literature

Appeal: successful – 14 December, Saratov Regional Court

24) 28 September

Name: Oleg Kim

Fine: 5000 Roubles

Court: Smidovich District Court, Jewish Autonomous Region

Situation: charged with participating in unlawful group "picket" of five Society for Krishna Consciousness adherents (including Yevgeny Fedoreyev and Vladimir Gerasimenko – see below – and Dmitry Moskvichyov and Nikolai Kryukov – see Part 2 list) outside "Voskhod" shop in Magadan, singing songs, offering religious literature, and promoting their "healthy way of life based on spiritual faith"

Appeal: none

25) 12 October

Name: Yevgeny Fedoreyev

Fine: unknown

Court: October District Court, Amur Region

Situation: charged with participating in unlawful group "picket" of five Society for Krishna Consciousness adherents (including Oleg Kim and Vladimir Gerasimenko – see above and below – and Dmitry Moskvichyov and Nikolai Kryukov – see Part 2 list) outside "Voskhod" shop in Magadan, singing songs, offering religious literature, and promoting their "healthy way of life based on spiritual faith"

Appeal: none

26) 14 October

Name: Vladimir Gerasimenko

Fine: unknown

Court: Soviet District Court, Vladivostok

Situation: charged with participating in unlawful group "picket" of five Society for Krishna Consciousness adherents (including Yevgeny Fedoreyev and Oleg Kim – see above – and Dmitry Moskvichyov and Nikolai Kryukov – see Part 2 list) outside "Voskhod" shop in Magadan, singing songs, offering religious literature, and promoting their "healthy way of life based on spiritual faith"

Appeal: none

27) 28 October

Name: V.A. Tishchenko

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Ussuriysk District Court, Primorye

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful "group picket" distributing religious literature; "at the time of the offence, Tishchenko was not engaged in worship, prayer, or a religious rite, but was displaying and distributing religious literature in a crowded public place" – judge concluded this occurred outside the places permitted under the Religion Law, and was therefore governed wholly by Demonstrations Law and required notification

Appeal: unsuccessful – 23 December, Primorye Regional Court

28) 9 November

Name: T.S. Shchennikova

Fine: 5000

Court: Kotelnich District Court, Kirov Region

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful "group picket" of four Jehovah's Witnesses (including Zyazeva – no evidence of charges against other two), using an information stand and "other forms of visual agitation" in a pedestrian zone to "raise awareness among the population and passers-by of the particularities of Jehovah's Witness doctrine" – message apparently sent to police, which resulted in the four being taken to the police station "which indicated a negative reaction on the part of citizens and, hence, did not exclude the potential danger of public disorder...requiring adequate control by the public authorities"; the judge concluded that "the purpose of a picket is to draw attention not only to a picketed object, but also to a particular problem or a particular socio-social phenomena .. Shchennikova openly demonstrated her religious opinion in a place in which the mass presence of people may be envisaged"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 9 February 2016, Kirov Regional Court

29) 11 November

Name: A.V. Zyazeva

Fine: 5000

Court: Kotelnich District Court, Kirov Region

Situation: charged with participation in an unlawful "group picket" of four Jehovah's Witnesses (including Shchennikova – see above – no evidence of charges against other two), using an information stand and "other forms of visual agitation" in a pedestrian zone to "raise awareness among the population and passers-by of the particularities of Jehovah's Witness doctrine" – message apparently sent to police, which resulted in the four being taken to the police station "which indicated a negative reaction on the part of citizens and, hence, did not exclude the potential danger of public disorder...requiring adequate control by the public authorities"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 22 December, Kirov Regional Court

30) 11 November

Name: L.R. Kagarmanova

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Sibai City Court, Bashkortostan

Situation: charged with participating in unlawful "group picket" with fellow Jehovah's Witness (A.M. Sagidullina – see below), "expressing opinions and relationship to the Bible, familiarising citizens with the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses by displaying printed products of the religious organisation on a specially equipped stand" near fountain in Victory Park; FSB alerted prosecutor to plans "to attract new adepts" – prosecutor's office official asked two passers-by to act as witnesses, and asked the women to go to the prosecutor's office to give statements

Appeal: unsuccessful but fine reduced to 5000 – 23 December, Supreme Court of Bashkortostan

31) 25 November

Name: A.M. Sagidullina

Fine: 5000

Court: Sibai City Court, Bashkortostan, Judge L.Kh. Sufyanova

Situation: charged with participating in unlawful "group picket" with fellow Jehovah's Witness (L.R. Kagarmanova – see above), "expressing opinions and relationship to the Bible, familiarising citizens with the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses by displaying printed products of the religious organisation on a specially equipped stand" near fountain in Victory Park; FSB alerted prosecutor to plans "to attract new adepts" – prosecutor's office official asked two passers-by to act as witnesses, and asked the women to go to the prosecutor's office to give statements

Appeal: unsuccessful – Supreme Court of Bashkortostan, 1 February 2016

32) 26 November

Name: N.V. Mironenko

Fine: unknown

Court: Prokhladny District Court, Kabardino-Balkariya

Situation: charged with participation with fellow Jehovah's Witness (Lyudmila Ponomarenko – see below) in "a public event in the form of picketing, setting up an information stand in a public place... distributing [religious] literature and publicly demonstrating their religious beliefs and opinions about religion, in violation of the established procedure [of conducting public events]"; also convicted by same court of distributing extremist literature, 6 November 2015

Appeal: none

33) 26 November

Name: Lyudmila Ponomarenko

Fine: unknown

Court: Prokhladny District Court, Kabardino-Balkariya

Situation: charged with participation with fellow Jehovah's Witness (N.V. Mironenko – see above) in "a public event in the form of picketing, setting up an information stand in a public place... distributing [religious] literature and publicly demonstrating their religious beliefs and opinions about religion, in violation of the established procedure [of conducting public events]"; also convicted by same court of distributing extremist literature, 6 November 2015

Appeal: none

34) 10 December

Name: Ye. A. Lavrentyeva

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Zavolzhsky District Court, Tver

Situation: charged with participation in "group picket" with unnamed fellow Jehovah's Witness (who was not charged), using an information stand to display brochures; defendant described this as "religious service"; judge concluded that she "openly demonstrated her religious beliefs in a place in which the mass presence of people is envisaged, by which she created the danger of public disorder associated with the infliction of damage to the moral and physical health of citizens"

Appeal: unsuccessful – 17 February 2016, Tver Regional Court

35) 11 December

Name: Ivan Tereshchuk

Fine: 10,000 Roubles

Court: Korolyov City Court, Moscow Region

Situation: charged with participating in a meeting for which no notification had been submitted – after attending a Pentecostal conference in Moscow, defendant and his wife walked to the Kamenny Bridge, where he "loudly told the people there about his life and how faith in God had transformed him"; defendant was taken away by police officers who said a complaint had been made

Appeal: none

(END)

For more background, see Forum 18's surveys of the general state of freedom of religion or belief in Russia at http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1722, and of the dramatic decline in religious freedom related to Russia's Extremism Law at http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1724.

A personal commentary by Alexander Verkhovsky, Director of the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis <http://www.sova-center.ru>, about the systemic problems of Russian anti-extremism legislation, is at F18News 19 July 2010 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1468.

A personal commentary by Irina Budkina, Editor of the <http://www.samstar.ucoz.ru> Old Believer website, about continuing denial of equality to Russia's religious minorities, is at F18News 26 May 2005 http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=570.

More reports on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Russia can be found at <http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?query=&religion=all&country=10>.

A compilation of Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) freedom of religion or belief commitments can be found at http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1351.

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