

5 February 2025

CRIMEA: Two more Jehovah's Witness prisoners of conscience jailed

By Felix Corley, Forum 18 (<https://www.forum18.org>)

On 14 January, a Russian-controlled court in the occupied Ukrainian city of Sevastopol jailed two Jehovah's Witnesses, 53-year-old Sergey Zhigalov and 55-year-old Viktor Kudinov, for six years each for organising the activities of a banned "extremist" organisation. They have appealed against the sentence. Eleven of the 13 jailed Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses have been illegally transferred to Russian prisons. Two other trials against 5 Jehovah's Witnesses are underway, including against 69-year-old Tamara Brattseva. It is illegal under international law for Russia to enforce its own laws in occupied Ukrainian territory.

On 14 January, after a 22-month trial from March 2023, a judge in the Russian-occupied port city of Sevastopol found two Jehovah's Witnesses, 53-year-old Sergey Zhigalov and 55-year-old Viktor Kudinov, guilty of organising the activities of a banned "extremist" organisation. He jailed them for six years each. Zhigalov and Kudinov lodged appeals against the convictions on 27 January 2025. The appeals are due to be heard at Sevastopol City Court, and they remain in Investigation Prison in Simferopol until the appeals have been heard.

Russia banned Jehovah's Witnesses in 2017, a ban it is also illegally imposing in occupied Crimea (see below).

"The persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses is gaining momentum," Jehovah's Witnesses noted after the verdict. "In Crimea, in the last two years alone [from 2022], the number of accused has doubled - from 16 to 32. Eleven believers have been sent to labour camps for long terms." If Zhigalov and Kudinov lose their appeals, this would bring the number of current Crimean prisoners of conscience jailed for exercising their freedom of religion or belief to 13. Another is serving a suspended sentence, and yet another an assigned work sentence (see below).

(A list of the 13 people from Crimea currently serving jail sentences, one person with a suspended sentence, and one person doing assigned work to punish their exercise of freedom of religion or belief is at the base of this article. All are Jehovah's Witnesses.)

Two other trials against five Jehovah's Witnesses are now in February 2025 underway in Crimea. The 69-year-old Tamara Brattseva is on trial in Razdolnoe. The Russian Investigative Committee in Razdolnoe refused to say why Senior Investigator Yakov Merkulov – who has been transferred to a new job - had launched the case against her. "The case has already been handed to court. We cannot provide you with any information" (see below).

The re-trial of four Jehovah's Witnesses - Taras Kuzio, Sergei Lyulin, Pyotr Zhiltsov and Darya Kuzio – is underway in Yalta. Russian-occupied Crimea's Supreme Court overturned their convictions in March 2024. Less than two weeks later, Russian prosecutors sent the case back to court for a new trial (see below).

Ilya Rylov of Russian-occupied Sevastopol's Gagarin District Prosecutor's Office – who led the prosecution case against Zhigalov and Kudinov in court – refused to answer Forum 18's questions about the two secret witnesses used to convict them and put the phone down. One of the secret witnesses, Sergey Korkushko, had testified in various criminal cases against Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses over five years. Zhigalov said he did not know Korkushko personally (see below).

Russian Senior Investigator Maksim Ukrainsky – who launched the criminal case against Zhigalov and Kudinov in August 2022 - defended his decision at the time. "Believing in God is not punishable, but they continued the activity of a banned organisation," he told Forum 18 from Sevastopol in November 2022. "They attracted others to their organisation." He said he had explained to Zhigalov and Kudinov that their activity violated the law. "They chose their position". He did not answer his phone in late January and early February 2025 (see below).

On 3 October 2024, the Russian-appointed Crimean Supreme Court in Simferopol increased the sentences of two Jehovah's Witnesses from Russian-occupied Krasnogvardeiskoe in central Crimea, Yury Gerashchenko and Sergey Parfenovich. A panel of judges accepted the Prosecutor's arguments that their six-year suspended sentences (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) were "too soft" and changed them to six years in a labour camp. Both have

now been transferred to labour camps in Russia (see below).

In October 2024, Russian Senior Investigator Anatoly Farimov of the Investigative Committee in Simferopol launched a criminal case against Vitaly Burik from the eastern Crimean city of Kerch. The man who answered Senior Investigator Farimov's phone told Forum 18 it was a wrong number (see below).

When investigators launch criminal cases against Jehovah's Witnesses on "extremism" charges, they also launch early morning raids on individuals' homes. Investigators are usually accompanied by armed and often masked security personnel. Officials "crudely demanded the passwords for electronic devices, asked questions about fellow-believers and in one case threatened to harm a pet", Jehovah's Witnesses complained following raids associated with the case against Brattseva. They seized electronic devices, personal notes and money (see below).

"'Anti-extremist' legislation was used as a tool for targeting members of certain religious communities," the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted in a December 2024 report. It noted continued criminal prosecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea "based on the designation of their religious community as an 'extremist' organization in the Russian Federation" (see below).

The UN OHCHR report called on Russia to "Respect freedom of religion or belief in the occupied territory, in accordance with its obligations" under international human rights law and international humanitarian law (see below).

Russia's illegal March 2014 annexation of Crimea

(<https://www.nhc.no/en/qa-breaches-of-international-law-and-human-rights-issues-2/>) is not recognised by Ukraine or internationally. It is illegal under international law for Russia to enforce its own laws on occupied Ukrainian territory, as Russia is required to leave Ukrainian law in force (<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-64/commentary/1958?activeTab=undefined>).

Russian bans imposed in occupied Crimea

Russia's Supreme Court banned all Jehovah's Witness activity as "extremist" (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) in 2017. Russia has imposed this ban in Crimea, which it illegally occupied in March 2014.

Russia's Supreme Court banned as "extremist" (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) in 2008 an association based on the teachings of the late Turkish Islamic theologian Said Nursi, which Muslims in Russia deny has ever existed as a formal entity. The ban has led to prosecutions in Russia for "continuing the activity of an extremist organisation" of people who meet to study Nursi's works.

Russia's Supreme Court similarly banned as "extremist" (http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1724) the Muslim missionary movement Tabligh Jamaat in 2009. Four members of Tabligh Jamaat in Crimea were arrested in October 2017 for meeting to discuss their faith. Renat Suleimanov was jailed for four years (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2444) (he was freed at the end of his sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2816) in December 2020), while the others served suspended sentences (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897).

UN OHCHR to Russia: "Respect freedom of religion or belief in the occupied territory"

The report of the UN Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the human rights situation in Ukraine covering 1 September to 30 November 2024 (<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/ukraine/2024-12-31-pr41-ukraine-en.pdf>) expressed continuing concern in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine.

"Russian authorities continued to restrict the exercise of freedom of religion or belief in violation of their obligations under IHL [International humanitarian law] and IHRL [international human rights law]," the report, published on 31 December 2024, noted. "'Anti-extremist' legislation was used as a tool for targeting members of certain religious communities."

The OHCHR report noted continued criminal prosecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Crimea "based on the designation of their religious community as an 'extremist' organization in the Russian Federation".

The OHCHR report called on Russia to "Respect freedom of religion or belief in the occupied territory, in accordance with its obligations" under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Eleven of the 13 Jehovah's Witnesses given jail terms have already been illegally transferred to prisons in Russia to serve their

sentences, despite this breaking the Geneva Convention (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2789) (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Zhigalov and Kudinov: Investigator launches criminal cases

On 24 August 2022, Russian Senior Investigator Maksim Ukrainsky of Sevastopol's Nakhimov District Investigative Committee launched cases (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2790) against Sergey Aleksandrovich Zhigalov (born 30 March 1971) and Viktor Ivanovich Kudinov (born 25 January 1969) under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

The same day, Russian officials raided the two men's homes in Sevastopol, as well as that of a Jehovah's Witness married couple. They arrested Zhigalov and Kudinov and both spent two days in police detention.

The Investigative Committee website claimed that Zhigalov and Kudinov "had conducted meetings with followers in a conspiratorial flat" in Sevastopol.

Investigator Ukrainsky defended his decision to open the criminal case. "Believing in God is not punishable, but they continued the activity of a banned organisation," he told Forum 18 from Sevastopol in November 2022 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2790). "They attracted others to their organisation." He said he had explained to Zhigalov and Kudinov that their activity violated the law. "They chose their position."

(Investigator Ukrainsky did not answer his phone when Forum 18 called in late January and early February 2025.)

Sevastopol's Gagarin District Court ruled on 26 August 2022 that Zhigalov and Kudinov should be under house arrest for two months, until 23 October. It banned them from being in contact with anyone apart from those they lived with and using communication devices. Sevastopol City Court rejected the two men's appeals against house arrest on 7 October.

On 17 October 2022, Gagarin District Court changed the terms for Zhigalov and Kudinov to a ban on specific activities. In particular, he banned them from "visiting collective meetings of people following the Jehovah's Witness faith".

Zhigalov and Kudinov: Who are the "secret witnesses"?

The indictment accused Sergey Zhigalov and Viktor Kudinov of "the organisation and conduct of [worship services], which is expressed in setting tasks for other participants, calling on participants to respond, and also in the subsequent expression of gratitude for the given answers".

Prosecutors in the case against Zhigalov and Kudinov commissioned a "religious studies expert analysis". The defence subsequently contested this in court, pointing out that the sources used were not academic. The defence noted that it was hostile to the Jehovah's Witnesses' faith and "went beyond the competence of the expert".

Prosecutors based their case on testimony from two "secret witnesses". One, Nadezha Dykman, was given the false cover name of Ivanova.

Zhigalov noted that the other, Sergey Korkushko, had testified in various criminal cases against Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses over five years, Jehovah's Witnesses noted. Zhigalov added that he did not know Korkushko personally.

On 23 January 2025 Forum 18 asked Ilya Rylov of Gagarin District Prosecutor's Office – who led the prosecution case in court – about the two secret witnesses. He refused to answer and put the phone down.

Korkushko testified in the criminal trial of Jehovah's Witness Viktor Stashevsky at Sevastopol's Gagarin District Court. The court jailed Stashevsky for 6 years and 6 months (see list below).

Korkushko also testified in the criminal trial of Jehovah's Witness Igor Schmidt, which began at Sevastopol's Gagarin District Court in June 2021. The court jailed Schmidt for 6 years (see list below).

Korkushko claimed to have attended Jehovah's Witnesses meetings in Sevastopol until they were banned by Russia's Supreme Court in 2017. He claimed that after religious songs were sung, tithes were collected from all attendees. Schmidt's fellow believers noted that no collections were taken in meetings and that those who wanted to make donations put them in a box by the door.

Schmidt told the court that Korkushko was not known to him or his fellow believers as someone who had attended Jehovah's Witness meetings in Sevastopol up to 2017. He added that Korkushko "is known as a provocateur, whom the FSB uses for the illegal

and shameful persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Sevastopol. This witness gives knowingly false and contradictory testimony. Also, this testimony is word for word identical to the testimony of FSB officer Dmitrienko, which indicates that it is falsified."

Zhigalov and Kudinov: Trial begins

On 27 March 2023, Russian prosecutors handed the criminal case against Sergey Zhigalov and Viktor Kudinov to Sevastopol's Gagarin District Court. Their trial began under Judge Sergey Korotun with a preliminary hearing on 13 April 2023, according to court records. The two men rejected the charges against them. Nearly 13 hearings – some of them closed - were held between then and January 2024.

A positive character reference for Zhigalov was presented in court from a member of Sevastopol council who knows him. It described Zhigalov as "a decent, honest, non-conflictual person".

The prosecution case was led in court by Ilya Rylov of Gagarin District Prosecutor's Office, who came third in 2023 in a competition for best Sevastopol prosecuting official. He demanded a jail term for Zhigalov of 7 years, and for Kudinov of 6 years and 11 months.

Prisoners of conscience Zhigalov and Kudinov: Jailed for 6 years each

On 14 January 2025, Judge Sergey Korotun of Sevastopol's Gagarin District Court found the two Jehovah's Witnesses, Sergey Zhigalov and Viktor Kudinov, guilty under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activities of a banned extremist organisation"), according to court records. He jailed them for six years each.

More than 100 supporters came to the court building for the final hearing in the long-running trial, Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

Prisoners of conscience Zhigalov and Kudinov lodged appeals against the convictions on 27 January, Gagarin District Court website notes. The appeals are due to be heard at Sevastopol City Court, though no date has yet been set, according to court records. The verdict will not go into force until any appeal has been heard.

Kudinov and Zhigalov are due to remain in Investigation Prison in Simferopol until their appeal is heard (see list below).

"The persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses is gaining momentum," Jehovah's Witnesses said after the sentences handed down to Zhigalov and Kudinov. "In Crimea, in the last two years alone, the number of accused has doubled - from 16 to 32. Eleven believers have been sent to labour camps for long terms."

Prisoners of conscience Gerashchenko and Parfenovich: Suspended sentences turned into prison terms

In September 2022, officials of Russia's Investigative Committee and FSB security service – some of them armed and in masks – raided the homes of at least eight Jehovah's Witnesses in and around Krasnogvardeiskoe in central Crimea. Officers arrested Sergey Parfenovich (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2790), the head of the local legally-registered Jehovah's Witness community before it was forcibly liquidated in May 2017. A court ordered him held in pre-trial detention in Investigation Prison No. 1 in Simferopol while the criminal case against him was investigated.

Investigator Vladimir Novikov of the Russian Investigative Committee's Department for Investigating Especially Important Cases launched the criminal case initially against Parfenovich and later also including Yury Gerashchenko.

Prosecutors sent the criminal case against Gerashchenko and Parfenovich to Krasnogvardeiskoe District Court in July 2023. On 1 July 2024, Judge Valentin Shukalsky convicted them under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

Judge Shukalsky punished both Gerashchenko and Parfenovich with a 6-year suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) and, after release, one year of restricted freedom and a 5-year ban on leading or participating in public organisations.

On 3 October 2024, the Russian-appointed Crimean Supreme Court in Simferopol increased the punishments of Gerashchenko and Parfenovich. A panel of judges chaired by Natalya Grebennikova changed their six-year suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)s to six years in a labour camp.

Prisoners of conscience Gerashchenko and Parfenovich rejected all the accusations against them and asked for the July 2024 convictions to be overturned. However, the Judges accepted the Prosecutor's arguments that the suspended sentences (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) were "too soft", Jehovah's Witnesses noted.

The man who answered Investigator Novikov's phone when Forum 18 called on 4 February 2025 would not identify himself and put the phone down. The phone was then switched to an answering service.

Razdolnoe: Further raids, criminal case, trial

On 5 August 2024, Russian Senior Investigator Yakov Merkulov of the Investigative Committee in the northern Crimean village of Razdolnoe launched a criminal case against Tamara Ivanovna Brattseva (born 28 September 1955) under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

In the early morning two days later, Russian investigators and armed, masked security personnel raided the home of Brattseva and her husband in Razdolnoe, as well as of at least four other Jehovah's Witness homes in Razdolnoe and the nearby village of Senokosnoe, as well as in the southern Crimean town of Alushta. Senior Investigator Merkulov led the raids.

The officials "crudely demanded the passwords for electronic devices, asked questions about fellow-believers and in one case threatened to harm a pet", Jehovah's Witnesses complained. They seized electronic devices, personal notes and money.

Security personnel came to one of the Jehovah's Witnesses at work in Razdolnoe. "They placed him with his face to the ground and tied his hands with a nylon tie, which caused him injuries," Jehovah's Witnesses complained. The man later recorded his injuries at the emergency room, but officers at the police station took away the medical certificate documenting the injuries.

On 18 November 2024, prosecutors handed the criminal case against Brattseva to Razdolnoe District Court, according to court records. The case was assigned to Judge Mariya Bedritskaya. The trial began with an initial hearing on 5 December 2024 and is due to resume on 6 February 2025.

The Investigative Committee in Razdolnoe told Forum 18 on 5 February that Senior Investigator Merkulov has been transferred to another job. The official refused to say why Merkulov had launched the case against Brattseva. "The case has already been handed to court. We cannot provide you with any information."

Yalta: Re-trial for four Jehovah's Witnesses

Yalta City Court is holding a re-trial for four local Jehovah's Witnesses after Crimea's Supreme Court overturned their convictions. The court had initially convicted (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2816) Taras Grigoryevich Kuzio (born 19 June 1978), Sergei Aleksandrovich Lyulin (born 24 September 1984), Pyotr Alekseyevich Zhiltsov (born 19 August 1987) and Darya Nikolayevna Kuzio (born 13 March 1982) in February 2023. The court had jailed the three men for long terms and handed Darya Kuzio a suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897).

After the Supreme Court had overturned the convictions on 22 March 2024, prosecutors again presented the criminal case to court on 4 April 2024, less than two weeks later. The court allocated the case to Judge Kristina Kirillova. However, in November 2024 prosecutors had her removed from the case. The trial is now proceeding under Judge Anna Bakhurevich. The next hearing is due on 25 February 2025, according to the court website.

Taras Kuzio, Lyulin and Zhiltsov are again on trial under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

Zhiltsov and Taras Kuzio are also again on trial under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.3, Part 1 ("Financing extremist activity"), as is Darya Kuzio.

Kerch: New raids, new criminal case

On 8 October 2024, Russian Senior Investigator Anatoly Farimov of the Investigative Committee in Simferopol launched a criminal case against 53-year-old Vitaly Anatolyevich Burik from the eastern Crimean city of Kerch under Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article 282.2, Part 1 ("Organisation of the activity of a social or religious association or other organisation in relation to which a court has adopted a decision legally in force on liquidation or ban on the activity in connection with the carrying out of extremist activity").

Investigator Farimov claimed that Burik conducted "active actions of an organisational nature aimed at continuing the illegal activities of the extremist organisation banned by the court, the Local Religious Organisation of Jehovah's Witnesses of the City of Kerch, expressed in the organisation of propaganda meetings".

Early the following morning, officers of Kerch Investigative Committee and armed spetsnaz troops from Simferopol raided at least 10 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kerch. "In several cases, security personnel conducted themselves crudely and demanded the passwords of electronic devices," Jehovah's Witnesses complained. Officers seized electronic devices and took the Jehovah's Witnesses for questioning. They freed all of them – except Burik – that afternoon.

Officers arrested Burik at his place of work and took him back to his home for a search. They held him for two days before releasing him to house arrest. He remains under house arrest as the Investigative Committee's Especially Dangerous Crimes Department continues the investigation.

Burik noted that the house search had had a severe impact on his younger daughter. He and his wife care for her as she lives with disabilities.

Officers also raided the Kerch home of Artyom Alekseyevich Shably, who is serving a suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) (see list below).

The man who answered Senior Investigator Farimov's phone on 5 February told Forum 18 it was a wrong number.

Twelve more under criminal investigation

Russian Investigators are investigating criminal "extremism" cases against a further 12 Crimean Jehovah's Witnesses.

Investigator Vladimir Novikov of the Russian Investigative Committee's Department for Investigating Especially Important Cases – who opened the criminal cases against Parfenovich and Gerashchenko (see above) - launched the criminal case against four Jehovah's Witnesses in Simferopol in November 2022.

At least four of the 12 known to be under investigation - Aleksandr Kostenko (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2648), Mark Lyakh, Tadevos Manukyan (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2818) and Ivan Yefanov - appear to have left Crimea. Russia's Interior Ministry has placed them on its Federal Wanted List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2892).

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13 current Crimean prisoners of conscience jailed for exercising freedom of religion or belief

Fifteen people from Crimea are currently serving sentences after being criminally convicted on "extremism" charges to punish their exercise of freedom of religion or belief. All are Jehovah's Witnesses, and they are listed below.

Eleven prisoners of conscience have been given jail terms which have come into force. They have been illegally transferred to prisons in Russia.

A further two prisoners of conscience – whose convictions have not yet entered legal force - remain in Investigation Prison awaiting appeal hearings.

One Jehovah's Witness convicted on "extremism" charges is serving a suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897), and one an assigned work (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) sentence.

Crimean Muslims have also been jailed for exercising their freedom of religion or belief (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2774).

Occupied Crimea (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2774) is administered by Russia in two federal subjects or regions following the Ukrainian administrative divisions, the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

- Republic of Crimea

1) Sergei Viktorovich Filatov (born 6 June 1972)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 17 January 2019 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2444)

Sentenced: 5 March 2020, Dzhankoi District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 5 year (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2552) ban on educational activity, speaking publicly, and publishing in the media and on the internet (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 26 May 2020, Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea

Due for release from prison: 23 January 2026

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 23 January 2027

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 23 January 2026 to 23 January 2031

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 23 January 2035

Prison address: 344033, g. Rostov-na-Donu, per. Kazachy 22, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 10 UFSIN Rossii po Rostovskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

2) Artyom Vyacheslavovich Gerasimov (born 13 January 1985)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 2 July 2020

Sentenced: 5 March 2020, Yalta City Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: fine of 400,000 Russian Roubles (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2552)

Appeal: changed to 6 years' imprisonment (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2577) - 4 June 2020, Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea

Due for release from prison: 3 June 2026

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: unknown

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: no later than 3 June 2036

Prison address: 344033, g. Rostov-na-Donu, per. Kazachy 22, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 10 UFSIN Rossii po Rostovskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

3) Aleksandr Fyodorovich Dubovenko (born 31 March 1973)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 10 August 2021

Sentenced: 1 December 2022, Armyansk City Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years' imprisonment

Appeal: unsuccessful – 16 March 2023, Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea

Due for release from prison: 14 February 2028

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 140405, Moskovskaya oblast, g. Kolomna, proezd Kolychevsky 6, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 6 UFSIN Rossii

po Moskovskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

4) Aleksandr Viktorovich Litvinyuk (born 3 November 1960)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 10 August 2021

Sentenced: 1 December 2022, Armyansk City Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years' imprisonment

Appeal: unsuccessful – 16 March 2023, Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea

Due for release from prison: 10 February 2028

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 155644, Ivanovskaya oblast, Yuzhsky raion, s. Talitsy, ul. Shkolnaya 10, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 6 UFSIN Rossii po Ivanovskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

5) Yuri Petrovich Gerashchenko (born 2 August 1979)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 4 March 2024

Sentenced: 1 July 2024, Krasnogvardeiskoe District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Articles: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years' suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) + after release 5-year ban on leading or participating in public organisations

Appeal: suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) changed to prison term, 3 October 2024, Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea

Due for release from prison: 24 December 2029

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 24 December 2029 to 24 December 2034

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 404117, Volgogradskaya oblast, g. Volzhsky, ul. Aleksandrova 86, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 12 UFSIN Rossii po Volgogradskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

6) Sergey Georgiyevich Parfenovich (born 21 May 1972)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 4 March 2024

Sentenced: 1 July 2024, Krasnogvardeiskoe District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Articles: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years' suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) + after release 5-year ban on leading or participating in public organisations

Appeal: suspended sentence (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) changed to prison term, 3 October 2024,

Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea

Due for release from prison: 13 August 2029

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 24 December 2029 to 24 December 2034

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 414044, Astrakhanskaya oblast, g. Astrakhan, ul. Sovetskoy Gvardii, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 8 UFSIN Rossii po Astrakhanskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

- Sevastopol

7) Viktor Vladimirovich Stashevsky (born 11 July 1966)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 11 July 2019 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2496)

Sentenced: 29 March 2021, Gagarin District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years 6 months' jail + after release 7 year ban on educational activity, speaking publicly and publishing in the media and on the internet (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2648)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 10 August 2021 (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2694), Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: 24 July 2027

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 24 July 2027 to 24 July 2034

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 24 July 2036

Prison address: 600020, Vladimirskaya oblast, g. Vladimir, ul. Bolshaya Nizhegorodskaya 67, FKU Tyurma No. 2 UFSIN Rossii po Vladimirskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

8) Igor Yakovlevich Schmidt (born 18 June 1972)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 17 February 2022

Sentenced: 22 October 2021, Gagarin District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 6 year ban on educational activity, speaking publicly and publishing in the media and on the internet (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2694)

Appeal: unsuccessful – 13 January 2022, Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: 9 September 2026

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 9 September 2026 to 9 September 2032

Sudimost, administrative supervision and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 9 September 2035

Prison address: 344033, g. Rostov-na-Donu, per. Kazachy 22, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 10 UFSIN Rossii po Rostovskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

9) Vladimir Fedorovich Sakada (born 4 October 1970)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 13 July 2021

Sentenced: 6 October 2022, Nakhimov District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 7 year ban on educational activity, speaking publicly and publishing in the media and on the internet

Appeal: unsuccessful – 11 October 2023, Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: 11 October 2026

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 7 years from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 249275, Kaluzhskaya oblast, Sukhinichi, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 5 UFSIN Rossii po Kaluzhskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

10) Vladimir Ivanovich Maladyka (born 8 July 1963)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 13 July 2021

Sentenced: 6 October 2022, Nakhimov District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 7 year ban on educational activity, speaking publicly and publishing in the media and on the internet

Appeal: unsuccessful – 11 October 2023, Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: 28 July 2026

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 7 years from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 393265, Tambovskaya oblast, Rasskazovsky raion, p. Zeleny, ul. Tsentralnaya 6, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 3 UFSIN Rossii po Tambovskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

11) Yevgeny Sergeyevich Zhukov (born 19 November 1969).

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 13 July 2021

Sentenced: 6 October 2022, Nakhimov District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 7 year ban on educational activity, speaking publicly and publishing in the media and on the internet

Appeal: unsuccessful – 11 October 2023, Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: 18 August 2026

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 7 years from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Prison address: 150036, Yaroslavskaya oblast, g. Yaroslavl, ul. Khlebnaya 12, FKU Ispravitelnaya koloniya No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Yaroslavskoi oblasti, Russian Federation

12) Sergey Aleksandrovich Zhigalov (born 30 March 1971)

Sentenced: 14 January 2025, Gagarin District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 5-year ban on leading or participating in public organisations

Appeal: pending at Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: unknown

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 5 years from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Detention centre address: 295006 Respublika Krym, g. Simferopol, bul. Lenina 4, FKU Sledstvenny izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Respublike Krym i g. Sevastopolyu

13) Viktor Ivanovich Kudinov (born 25 January 1969)

Sentenced: 14 January 2025, Gagarin District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1

Punishments: 6 years + after release 5-year ban on leading or participating in public organisations

Appeal: pending at Sevastopol City Court

Due for release from prison: unknown

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 1 year from end of prison term

ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 5 years from end of prison term

Sudimost, administrative supervision, and being on Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

due to end: 8 years from end of restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Detention centre address: 295006 Respublika Krym, g. Simferopol, bul. Lenina 4, FKU Sledstvenny izolyator No. 1 UFSIN Rossii po Respublike Krym i g. Sevastopolyu

Crimeans serving suspended or assigned work sentences for exercising freedom of religion or belief

1) Artyom Alekseyevich Shably (born 11 November 1990)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 1 April 2024

Sentenced: 16 February 2022, Kerch City Court (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2789)

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 1.1

Punishments: 2-year suspended prison term (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897), with a 3-year probationary period (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897), 6 months' restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897), and a 3-year ban on leadership of and participation in public and religious organisations (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897)

Appeal: none

Restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) ended: August 2022

Ban on holding particular positions or undertaking particular activities (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: February 2025

Sudimost, and administrative supervision (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: February 2025

2) Maksim Viktorovich Zinchenko (born 9 April 1992)

Added to Rosfinmonitoring List (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897): 26 August 2024

Sentenced: 16 April 2024, Nakhimov District Court

Russian Criminal Code (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) Article: 282.2, Part 2

Punishments: 2 years' assigned work (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897), with 10 per cent of salary taken by state, plus restrictions on freedom (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) for 1 year

Appeal: none

assigned work (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2897) due to end: 3 May 2026

(END)

More reports on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Crimea (<https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?country=86>)

For background information, see Forum 18's Crimea religious freedom survey (https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2774)

Forum 18's reports and analyses on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Russia within its internationally-recognised territory (<https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?query=&religion=all&country=10>)

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

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