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Jehovah's Witness member goes on trial in Russia

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Mon Dec 6, 9:42 am ET

MOSCOW . The religious group Jehovah's Witness said Monday one of their local leaders in Russia was being persecuted under a vague anti-extremism law.

Alexander Kalistratov is on trial in the Siberian town of Gorno-Altai for alleged "incitement of religious enmity and hatred," the group's representative Robert Warren said. If convicted, Kalistratov faces up to two years in jail.

The trial is part of a "larger problem" that Jehovah's Witnesses have been facing in Russia, Warren told The Associated Press. He called the trial a "misapplication" of Russia' 2002 anti-extremism law.

Human rights advocates claim that the law has been used to crack down on dissidents and religious groups that Russia's dominant Orthodox Church disapproves of.

In September 2009, a court in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don banned a regional branch of Jehovah's Witnesses and outlawed dozens of its publications. A 2004 ruling by the Moscow City Court prohibited Jehovah's Witnesses branch in the Russian capital.

A 2004 ruling by the Moscow City Court prohibited Jehovah's Witnesses branch in the Russian capital from engaging in religious activities.

Warren said that Kalistratov, 34, has been accused of disseminating banned literature after he shared some of the group's publications with the residents of Gorno-Altai.

In the early 2000s, Kalistratov was acquitted of draft dodging charges, said the group's Russian spokesman, Grigory Martynov.

"He stood trial for refusing to take up arms, and now he's being tried for being an extremist," Martynov said.

There are at least 160,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia.

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Big 23 minutes ago | [Report Abuse](#) 0 0

"The European Court of Human Rights guaranteed these freedoms to ALL religions, even the ones who knock on your doors." - JT

LOL, like the Russians care what the ECHR has to say.

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SententialInfero 1 hour ago | [Report Abuse](#) 0 5

I don't care what JW's do in Russia, I just don't want them coming to MY door.

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Taz 1 hour ago | [Report Abuse](#) 1 6

"Separation of church and state" only applies in the United States. When you are in another man's country, you have to "obey the laws of the land" in that country. Most Americans don't seem to realize that our constitution and the amendments to our constitution are not applicable beyond our (U.S.) borders.

The JW's cannot go spread their word in other countries and expect the same %freedom of speech, freedom of religion+that they receive here in the U.S. Had it not been for Thomas Jefferson they couldnq do it here in the U.S.

Remember, without the 2nd (right to bear arms) amendment there would currently be no 1st (freedom of speech, religionō) amendment.

[Replies \(1\)](#)

Sherrill 1 hour ago | [Report Abuse](#) 0 1

Would you guys like to guess the two reasons this case isn't getting as much attention as the *christian* woman being *state sanctioned murdered* for her beliefs?

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JT 2 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#) 6 2

I've posted 50 comments and nothing.....way to go Yahoo.

Maybe you should move to Russia. They seem to like their censorship, too.

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Brad 3 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#) 0 9

Any publicity is good PR. The JW's in Russia need a martyr.

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Rusty 4 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#) 10 0

I once knew a JW that was a WWII Vet. He was a gunsmith, and taught me most of what I know about gunsmithing... The first time I met him, we shared religious views, accepted the differences, and were friends as long as he lived. It's the extremists that usually cause problems.

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Ron 5 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#) 8 0

JW's don't go to war. Can't they just teach them self defense & leave them alone..they survived Hitler.. & they may survive the immoral of the society today.. that's where the war is!

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Rasputin's Ghost 5 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#) 7 2

Maybe they came to Putin door at 7AM on a Sunday....

[Replies \(1\)](#)

Yarddog 5 hours ago | [Report Abuse](#) 12 0

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im not a jw, but i am tolerant of other beliefs.
yd

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