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Russian Prosecutors Say Jehovah's Witnesses Broke Rally Law

17:26 14/10/2013

Tags: [Jehovah's Witnesses](#), [Vladimir Putin](#), [Barnaul](#), [Russia](#)

MOSCOW, October 14 (RIA Novosti) – Russian prosecutors said Monday that a Siberian branch of Jehovah's Witnesses had broken the law on public rallies by holding a mass gathering of 3,000 followers over the summer.

Officials in the city of Barnaul said the religious organization should have informed authorities of its plans to hold the public prayer meeting at a horse racetrack in the city on August 23-25.

Jehovah's Witnesses, which has more than seven million followers worldwide, including over 130,000 in Russia, faces frequent pressure from Russian authorities and has been banned in a number of regions and in some former Soviet republics over its religious beliefs.

A Moscow court in 2004 ordered the dissolution of the local branch of Jehovah's Witnesses and banned its activities amid charges the community was brainwashing children and breaking up families through its teachings.

The European Court of Human Rights in 2010 ruled that the decision was unlawful and ordered Russia to pay 70,000 euros (\$95,000) in damages.

President Vladimir Putin last year approved changes to the law on public rallies to substantially increase penalties for people involved in unauthorized demonstrations.

He said the change to the law, which followed a series of large-scale street protests against Putin and the government, was designed to combat radicalism, but government critics accused the president of seeking to clamp down on opposition to his rule.

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

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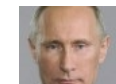
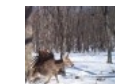
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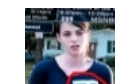
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