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Jehovah's Witnesses

Moscow (AsiaNews) - Among small legal victories, the Kremlin's indifference and attacks on their places of worship, the struggle of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia to see the respect of their human rights and religious freedom continues. There is a campaign of persecution, of physical and judicial attacks on the community in different areas of the Russian Federation. The latest episode is the Ministry of Justice response to

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a letter sent in November by VM Kalin, chairman of the Steering Committee of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, to President Dmitry Medvedev. Theletter denounced Editor's choices arbitrary" trials masked by accusations of "religious extremism" going on in different courts and a climate of "xenophobic hysteria" against the community, the Russian government responded succinctly: decisions taken by the Supreme Court will be fully implemented . Complete silence and indifference to the issues raised by Kalin. What does this mean?

The Russian government confirms condemnation of

The Ministry of Justice confirmed Supreme Court decisions. Trials pending in several Russian cities to outlaw faithful branded as "religious extremists". New Year, Molotov



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## Attacks and some judicial success

In September the Supreme Court outlawed the community of Jehovah's Witnesses in the city of Taganrog, Neklinov and Matveeva -Kurgan. Judges ruled the ban on their activities and the dissolution of groups. The Supreme Court has confirmed the conviction handed down by the Provincial Court of Rostov. Other trials are also pending that could lead to the dismantling of communities in different parts of the country: in Salsk (province of Rostov), Gorno-Altaisk (Altai Republic), Krasnodar (Krasnodar province), Vladikavkaz (Republic of 'North Ossetia-Alania), Lomonosov (province Arkangelsk) and Yekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk province). To defend themselves against accusations and avert the dissolution of the organization's community leaders in Russia, intend to appeal to European Court for Human Rights, they believe, in fact, that the charges raised against them contradict the principles upon which Russia's cooperation with countries like the United States and Germany in fighting religious extremism is based.

But it is not only defeats. In December, the Jehovah's Witnesses won a trial that saw them charged with "extremist activities and literature" in Orks (province of Orenburg) and Samara. In both cases the judges found no violation of federal law in the work of the community, as advocated instead by the prosecutors

## More attacks

Attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses are not, however, confined to the courtrooms. New Year's Eve, a few minutes after midnight, two Molotov cocktails were thrown against the Kingdom Hall (the place of worship in the community) of Volzhsky in the province of Volgograd. The attackers took advantage of the uproar caused by the fireworks to launch their attack; the flames have caused some damage to the building, but rescuers were able to extinguish it before the fire spread.

Probably Russia finds "fault" with the Jehovah's Witnesses in their practices: conscientious objection to military service, refusing to take up arms, refusing blood transfusions and the demand of total dedication of members to the life of the community.

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becomes "Person of the

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