

Ambassador Teimuraz Otarovich Ramishvili
Embassy of the Russian Federation in Norway
PO Box 4025 AMB
0244 Oslo

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about the continuing human rights violations against religious minorities in Russia. The July 2016 “anti-missionary” amendment to the Religion Law and its associated Administrative Code, as part of the Yarovaya law, allows for such a wide interpretation that peaceful religious practices may be penalised.

Your Excellency, according to human rights organisations more than 250 Jehovah’s Witnesses are facing criminal prosecution after their religious community was designated an “extremist organisation”. They have not committed any crime but have been practicing their faith peacefully. Human rights organisations also allege that members of Jehovah’s Witnesses have been subjected to torture in prison. Such treatment constitutes a clear violation of Russia's international obligations under the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Russia has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and is therefore obligated to ensure the right to freedom of religion, thought and conscience of everyone under its jurisdiction.

I humbly petition your intervention in these cases to ensure that:

- all actions targeting religious minorities in Russia for peacefully practicing their faith are stopped immediately;
- imprisoned believers shall be granted fair trails and kept safe from torture. If their cases are unfounded, they should be acquitted and released immediately;
- the Religion Law and its associated Administrative Code is revised, and the scope of these laws limited to prevent the misuse against individuals or groups who peacefully practice their religion or faith.

Thank you in advance for using your influence as ambassador and conveying this message to the relevant authorities in your country.

Yours sincerely,