



Ivan Vasilievich Poluektov
Prosecutor of Orel Region
Prosecutor's Office of Orel Region
Ul. Krasnoarmeiskaia, 17a
302040 Orel
Russian Federation

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
DANISH SECTION**

Gammeltorv 8, 5. floor
DK-1457 Copenhagen K
Denmark

www.amnesty.dk
amnesty@amnesty.dk

12.03.2019

Dear Prosecutor,

I write to you on behalf of Amnesty International Denmark as well as the 39.863 Danish and Faroese citizens that have signed our petition in support of Dennis Christensen, a Danish national and Jehovah's Witness.

We are deeply concerned that Dennis Christensen has been arrested and prosecuted solely for exercising his right to freedom of religion, and we therefore call on you to ensure that he is released immediately and unconditionally and that his conviction is quashed.

On 6 February 2019, Zheleznodorzhnyi District Court in Orel found Dennis Christensen guilty of "organizing activities of an extremist organization" (Article 282.2 (1) of the Russian Criminal Code) and sentenced him to six years' imprisonment. According to the prosecution, Dennis Christensen was organizing local worship. Him making respective announcements, collecting donations and organizing cleaning of the venue used by the worshipers, was cited as evidence of his "crime".

The right to freedom of religion is enshrined both in the Russian Constitution and in international human rights treaties to which Russia is a state party. By prosecuting Dennis Christensen, as well as other Jehovah's Witnesses, Russia violates its human rights obligations. Amnesty International considers Dennis Christensen a prisoner of conscience, deprived of his liberty solely for exercising his right to freedom of religion.

Dennis Christensen was arrested a month after the Supreme Court's decision, becoming the first Jehovah's Witness to be detained in Russia following the ban in 2017, with several other followers of the faith arrested since. Amnesty International regards the Russian authorities' decision to criminalize Jehovah's Witness's teachings and practices an arbitrary and discriminatory measure, and a violation of the right to freedom of religion. Since 2009, Jehovah's Witnesses have faced persecution and harassment in Russia under the country's anti-extremism legislation. The anti-extremism legislation in Russia is often applied arbitrarily to prosecute government critics and other dissent, and we therefore urge the Russian authorities to review the relevant legislation and practice and bring them in line with international standards.

We urge you to ensure that Dennis Christensen is released immediately and unconditionally and that his conviction is quashed.

I thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Yours respectfully,

Trine Christensen
Secretary General