

Ambassador H.E. Mr Teymuraz Ramishvili
Embassy of the Russian Federation in Norway
PO Box 4025 AMB
0244 Oslo

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern about Sergei Filatov and Artyom Gerasimov, two men from Crimea who belong to the religious group Jehovah's Witnesses. Sergei Filatov was jailed on 5 March 2020 for meeting with family and friends to sing, pray and discuss religious themes. He was sentenced to six years in labour camp prison and five years additional restrictions allegedly for "continuing the activities of a banned extremist organisation." Artyom Gerasimov was also convicted on 5 March 2020 in Yalta City Court on extremism-related criminal charges. He was merely meeting with others to discuss the Bible. He was sentenced to six years in prison.

I wish to highlight article 28 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees everyone the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with other any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them.

Your Excellency, I humbly ask for the re-evaluation of the sentences of these two men, as they performed no harmful or illegal actions. According to article 28 of the Constitution, the two men are granted the freedom to meet with other believers, discuss and express their faith. I believe that the Russian government is a protector of the fundamental human rights and that they will do what they can to protect Mr. Filatov and Mr. Gerasimov. I also wish to speak on behalf of other Jehovah's Witnesses who have been imprisoned and are under investigation because of their faith.

I, therefore, humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- Sergei Filatov and Artyom Gerasimov is ensured fair treatment according to article 28 of the Russian Constitution, that they are released from prison, and if a new trial is necessary, that they get a lawyer of their choice.
- The persecution of other innocent Jehovah's Witnesses is stopped immediately and that they are allowed to meet and express their faith in fellowship with other believers.

Sincerely,