

# URGENT ACTION

## RUSSIAN JEHOVAH'S WITNESS RELEASED

On 7 April the Prosecutor General's office in Belarus denied Russia's request to extradite Jehovah's Witness Nikolai Makhlichev. Nikolai Makhlichev is facing unfounded charges of 'extremism' in Russia, stemming solely from exercising his right to freedom of religion, which led to his detention in Belarus on 21 February. Following the refusal to extradite him to Russia, Nikolai Makhlichev was immediately freed from detention. He is now awaiting the decision on his asylum application in Belarus.

**NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.**

On 7 April the Prosecutor General's office denied Russia's extradition request for Jehovah's Witness Nikolai Makhlichev. He was immediately released from detention and went to his friend's house in Viciebsk, northeast Belarus. Nikolai Makhlichev is currently awaiting the decision on his asylum application in Belarus.

Jehovah's Witnesses face persecution in Russia where their organization was arbitrarily banned as "extremist" in April 2017. The criminal investigation against Nikolai Makhlichev started in January 2019. He was charged under Articles 282.2 (1) and 282.3 (1) of the Russian Criminal Code for purportedly "organizing activities of an extremist organization" and "financing extremist activities" punishable by up to ten and eight years in prison, respectively. Nikolai Makhlichev has never held any formal position with Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia. According to his representative, he was just a believer who participated in their religious services. During the investigation, Nikolai Makhlichev was put on an interstate wanted list which led to his arrest and detention on 21 February in Haradok, northeast Belarus.

Amnesty International regards the prosecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia as an arbitrary and discriminatory measure, and a violation of the right to freedom of religion. The organization has called on the Russian authorities to quash the judicial decisions that have criminalized Jehovah's Witnesses' teachings and practices.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Nikolai Makhlichev (he/his)

**THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 47/20**

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur49/2086/2020/en/>

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