

First Russian Charged Under Controversial Anti-Missionary Law

August 11, 2016

The  **Moscow Times**

A Krishnaite in southern Russia's Cherkessk has been charged under the "Yarovaya Law" for handing out religious books on the street, the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis reported Thursday. This is the first time that charges have been pressed under the anti-missionary part of the controversial law.

At the end of July a local man informed the Interior Ministry in Cherkessk of a Krishnaite activist who engaged in conversation with two people on the street about his beliefs and gave them some religious books.

As a result, administrative action has been brought against the Krishnaite. He is accused of infringing the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses in relation to religious associations and the freedom of worship.

The defendant has no affiliation to religious organizations and maintains he did not try to

talk other people into joining one. Nevertheless, a representative from the Center for Combating Extremism said in court that the Krishnaite violated the Religious Associations and Freedom of Conscience Law.

According to recent amendments to anti-terror laws authored by ultraconservative Duma Deputy Irina Yarovaya and Senator Viktor Ozerov, the law restricts missionary activities to premises occupied by religious organizations.

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