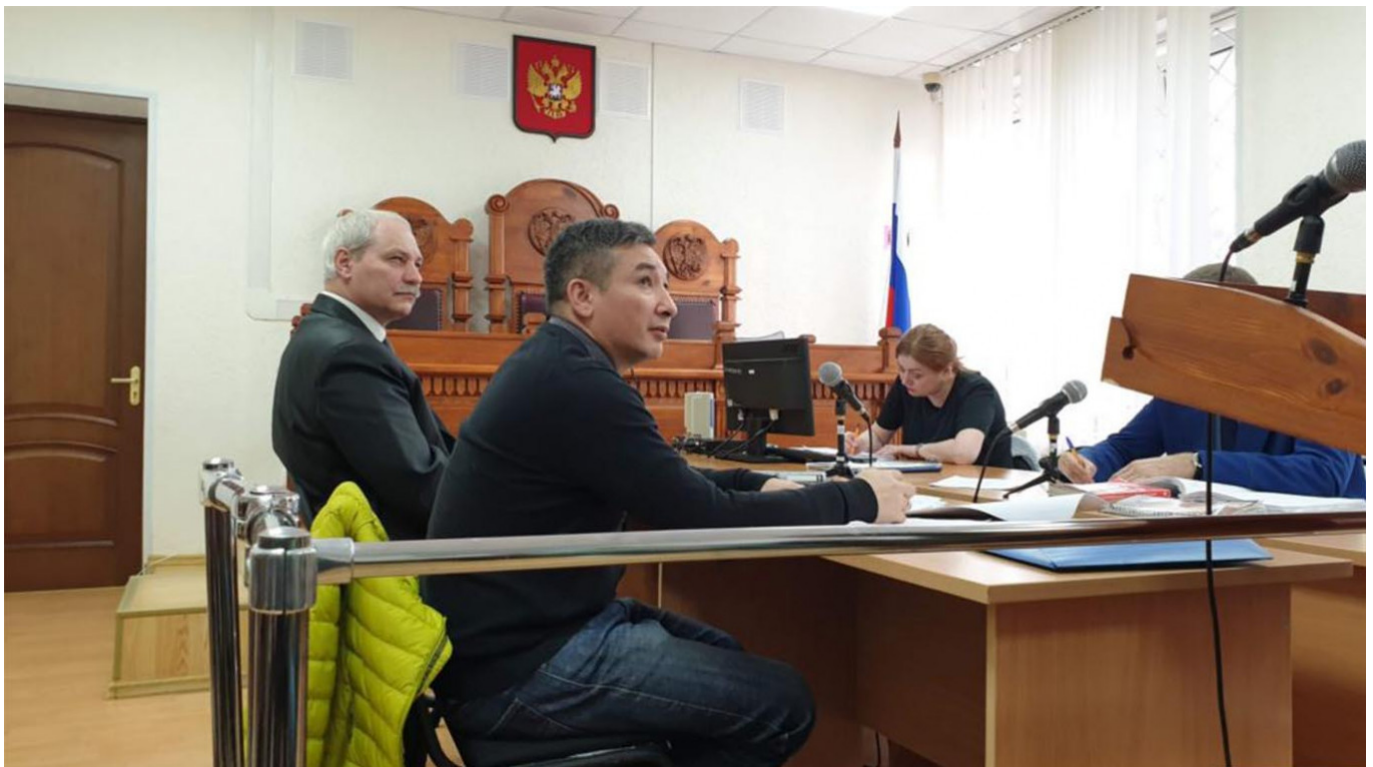


Russia Hands ‘Harshes, Longest’ Jail Sentence to Jehovah’s Witness

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Shpakovsky’s sentence is the latest episode in Russia’s crackdown on the Jehovah’s Witnesses, which the country declared an “extremist” organization in 2017. **Lyudmila Savitskaya / severreal.org**

A court in western Russia has sentenced a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses to six and a half years in jail on charges of extremism, a prison term the religious organization described as unprecedented in length and severity.

The Pskov City Court handed Gennady Shpakovsky, 61, the sentence early Tuesday after mass [raids](#) led to dozens of arrests across Russia in 2018. Authorities wiretapped his family’s apartment and monitored their movements for several months before armed agents broke in during a religious meeting at his home, the Jehovah’s Witnesses group said.

Related article: [Russia ‘Escalating’ Jehovah’s Witnesses Crackdown – HRW](#)

“This is the longest, harshes sentence handed down” to a Jehovah’s Witness in Russia, the New York-based organization said in a statement.

