

Russia Attempts to Silence American Missionary Under 'Anti-Terrorism' Laws

Russia charged an American pastor under the new "anti-terrorism" laws and shut down his ministry, according to reports.

Donald Ossewaarde has now been fined \$630 and is expected to appear in court later this year. However, he is appealing his charges.

When the Yarovaya Law first passed in July, Donald Ossewaarde said he wasn't worried, that he believed his ministry would be exempt.

He shared in a prayer letter:

When I read descriptions of the law in the news media, I was fairly convinced that our ministry here was finished. After the evangelists left town, I had some time to read the actual law and translate the relevant parts for myself. A close look at the law reveals that it only applies to officially registered Russian religious organizations and groups. Since we operate as private individuals, our work does not fit the law's narrow definition of "missionary activity." I watched an online seminar by lawyers at an important legal group that defends religious liberty cases. According to their analysis, the new law does not apply to us at all. I contacted them, and they said they would defend us if we have any good news, but it is much more comforting to know that God will always defend us as we serve Him. We thank and praise Him for "confusing our enemies," as they wrote a law that apparently is ineffective. I have searched the news for reports of any persecution since the law was enacted. So far, all seems to be quiet. Please pray.

Yet Ossewaarde was one of the first people arrested once the law took effect.

Police stormed into his Bible study and arrested him in front of 15 students.

Ossewaarde is not the only foreign missionary to be prosecuted under the new restrictions.

According to Fox News, the following have faced persecution:

- Sergei Zhuravlyov, a Ukrainian Reformed Orthodox Church of Christ representative, was arrested for preaching in St. Petersburg.
- Ebenezer Tuah of Ghana, the leader of the Christ Embassy church, was arrested and fined 50,000 rubles for conducting baptisms at a sanatorium in the city of Tver.
- Jim Mulcahy, a 72-year-old American pastor who is the Eastern European coordinator for the Metropolitan Community Church, was arrested and deported under the prohibition of missionary activities at non-religious sites.

“The Yarovaya laws have sent Russia careening back toward the days of the Soviet Union in terms of religious freedom,” International Christian Concern President Jeff King said. “Donald’s case is likely just the tip of the iceberg; these laws affect everyone in Russia, not just foreign missionaries.”

Ossewaarde was denied his first level of appeal and must go further into the court system, according to an update on his website.

Please continue to pray. I am overwhelmed at the feedback I am getting from people in many countries who are following the case and praying for us. Your prayers are felt, and we need them now more than ever. God bless you,” he says.

