

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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Trial to ban Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow resumes Tuesday

MOSCOW—The retrial aimed at banning Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow is scheduled to resume on February 17, 2004, in the Golovinsky Intermunicipal District Court, Judge Vera K. Dubinskaya presiding.

The latest in a series of expert studies conducted on the literature of Jehovah's Witnesses is complete and will be considered when the trial resumes. The Court ordered the expert study in May 2003. Since the first trial started in September 1998, at least four expert studies have delayed a final decision by over four years.

In the meantime, Moscow authorities have frustrated efforts by Jehovah's Witnesses to obtain places of worship. The Witnesses have not been able to purchase existing buildings, nor could they obtain properties on which to build. In their attempts to rent meeting places, they have encountered a pattern of obstruction and difficulties. On 26 occasions during 2003, Jehovah's Witnesses were refused rental contracts, and there have been four such incidents in the first three weeks of 2004. Managers are threatened with dismissal if they continue to rent meeting places to Jehovah's Witnesses.

In December 2001 an application was submitted to [the European Court of Human Rights](#) on the basis of repetitive prosecution, which violates individual and collective rights of the Applicants as guaranteed under the European Convention. The European Court is presently collecting further details on these incidents.

There are now over 133,000 active Witnesses in Russia, and last year 282,350 persons attended their commemoration of the death of Christ.

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