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LAW COURT SUPPRESSES MOSCOW JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES COMMUNITY

MOSCOW, MARCH 30 (RIA NOVOSTI) - The Golovinsky district court banned the Moscow community of Jehovah's Witnesses with a verdict of March 26.

The Russian Interfaith Council, uniting Primates of the Russian Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist communities in Russia approves. "This [Jehovah's Witnesses] is a dangerous totalitarian sect. Its activities badly undermine wholesome public spirituality. Leaders of the four religions established in this country are at one on the point," comments Roman Silantsev, council Executive Secretary.

"Not Orthodox Christians alone but members of all other religions and confessions long established in Russia were bearing grudges against the cult," he said in a Novosti interview.

"Many complained of Jehovah's Witnesses as the sect was appealing to separate families, and stooping to derisive opinions of established religious communities. The Russian Orthodox Church and Muslims had the worst of it. More than that, the sect forbids blood transfusions, and the ban was taking a toll of lives by the dozen. Many children died of it." Proceedings on the now outlawed community started as long ago as September 1998, after the prosecutor's inspectors of the Northern municipal district made a check on it. Jehovah's Witnesses were instigating strife between religions, encouraged the faithful to quit family, and persuaded badly ill people to bow to God's will and do without medical aid, was the expert conclusion, upon which the prosecutor's office applied to court to accuse the community of extremist activities.

The same Golovinsky court acquitted the sect in 2001 to turn down the district prosecutor's demand to ban it. The prosecutor's men appealed to the Moscow city court, which overrode the verdict to remit the case for further inquiry.

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