

### III. Minimising other gross acts of State persecution

“... I would argue that the propaganda value of Witnesses being oppressed and persecuted outweighs any financial hit that the organisation takes because a few buildings [all places of worship throughout Russia] have been impounded.<sup>11</sup> Watchtower needs these stories and needs these narratives for its theology to make sense.” (01:08:45)

13 June 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prf\\_2nZcaRg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prf_2nZcaRg) [“Be Courageous”! Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses – Friday (rebuttal)]

“... Watchtower [is] revelling in the fact that there are certain governmental regimes that are against Jehovah's Witnesses. Well not just Jehovah's Witnesses, as it turns out, especially in the case of Russia, but other fringe groups that the authorities find it difficult to control, because Jehovah's Witnesses are neutral politically and take their orders from New York. You can understand why something like that would get on the nerves of a leader like Putin.” (02:21:20)

22 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1VxaAAgp0M> [“Be Courageous”! Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses – Sunday (rebuttal)]

“A spokesperson for the Jehovah's Witnesses, said Tuesday that investigators in the Siberian city of Surgut had stripped, suffocated, doused with water and applied stun guns on at least seven believers detained on extremism charges days after criminal cases were reportedly initiated against 19 Jehovah's Witnesses following mass raids. The agents stripped the men naked, put a bag over each suspects head and wrapped it with tape. Agents then tied each suspects hands behind his back, smashed his fingers and beat him on his neck, feet and kidney ... this plays directly into the Governing Body’s hands. I mean seriously, if you are Stephen Lett, Tony Morris, Mark Sanderson and Geoffrey Jackson. I think it's unreasonable to say they're ‘rubbing their hands’, but this is furnishing those men with decades worth of persecution porn.” (00:01:50; 00:08:40)

20 February, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP5\\_eO7KehU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP5_eO7KehU) [Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia Are Being Tortured]

“So what we have here is yet more persecution porn. This shows perfectly how Watchtower leaps on persecution and craves it” (01:29:05) “... Nikolai ... is talking about being unfairly detained for 10 days during which time he was mistreated, he wasn't fed enough, he was threatened, there were fellow detainees being beaten up ... and he's got this massive smile

---

<sup>11</sup> This is grossly offensive and minimizes the severe persecution Jehovah’s Witnesses are facing in Russia. On 20 April 2017 the Supreme Court of Russia banned Jehovah’s Witnesses country wide and ordered the State seizure of all of their consecrated places of worship. No other religious community has faced a similar nation-wide ban. As in the Soviet era, it is now a criminal act for Jehovah’s Witnesses to meet for worship, read their religious literature, or in any other way practice their faith.

As of 31 January 2020, more than 305 Jehovah’s Witnesses have been charged under Article 282.2(1) and/or 282.2(2) of the Criminal Code, which carries a sentence of up to 10 years imprisonment. Dozens are being held in pre-trial detention. There have been more than 811 separate police raids on the homes of Jehovah’s Witnesses (see [jw-russia.org](http://jw-russia.org)). The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has concluded that Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia are the victims of “systemic and institutionalized persecution” (Opinion No. 11/2019 concerning Dmitry Mikhaylov, para 74, A/HRC/WGAD/2019, 26 April 2019; Opinion No. 34/2019 concerning Vladimir Alushkin, para. 65, A/HRC/WGAD/2019/34, 27 September 2019), as has the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe, Decision CM/DeI/Dec(2019)1355/H46-19, 25 September 2019).

on his face. Frankly this is showing, at least in one instance, a Jehovah's Witness loving the fact that he was persecuted." (01:44:05)

13 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTysL1beSGA> ["Be Courageous"! Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses – Saturday (rebuttal)]

"Again you have this obsession with raking over stories from yesteryear that relate to persecution,<sup>12</sup> or as I've started calling it, persecution porn, to remind Witnesses that the organization is being oppressed". (00:03:15)

10 November 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe\\_72tBi7L8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe_72tBi7L8) [My thoughts on JW Broadcasting 47 – November 2018]

"Quite simply Watchtower has been willing to see hundreds of men go for, I think, up to two years in jail simply because they don't want Jehovah's Witnesses doing anything that even mimics going to war. They take seriously the scripture in Isaiah that says they shall not learn war anymore, and they say, well, therefore you can't even do the basic training, you can't even learn how to assemble and clean a weapon, you can't crawl through mud on these assault courses, because that means you're learning how to do war. Just through sheer stubbornness they are willing to see generations, I mean in this video we're seeing men in the 1970s – think of all the men not just in Korea but in other countries as well – who've languished in jail cells as Jehovah's Witnesses simply because of Watchtowers obsessive approach to this issue.<sup>13</sup> That's the side of the story that you're simply not going to hear in these JW broadcasting propaganda pieces." (00:49:28)

10 November 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe\\_72tBi7L8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe_72tBi7L8) [My thoughts on JW Broadcasting 47 – November 2018]

"While in one country Watchtower was quite happy to see Jehovah's Witnesses being beaten and even raped over the issue of Christian neutrality, in another country, you could argue closer to home in Mexico - they were quite happy for Jehovah's Witnesses to completely ignore Christian neutrality by bribing officials." (00:33:15)

31 March 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYyJYSEPxVo> [My thoughts on JW Broadcasting – March 2019]

---

<sup>12</sup> It is grossly offensive to describe as "persecution porn" the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses honour and remember victims of persecution, including those who spent decades of their lives imprisoned and maltreated by Soviet authorities. As in *R v. Sheppard and another* [2010] EWCA Crim 65, this is tantamount to suggesting that Jehovah's Witnesses invent or exaggerate "stories of the commission of atrocities against them", although that persecution is universally accepted as a historical fact.

<sup>13</sup> This hate speech minimises the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Korea which resulted in thousands being imprisoned for up to two years for their refusal to join the army because of their sincerely held religious conscience. The right to conscientious objection to military service is a universally recognised human right, repeatedly affirmed by the European Court of Human Rights (*Bayatyan v. Armenia* [GC] no. 23459/03, §§ 111, 123-126, 7 July 2011), by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (*Atasoy and Sarkut v. Turkey*, communication Nos. 1853/2008 and 1854/2008, 29 March 2020, paras. 10-1 to 10.4), by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (Opinion No. 40/2018, concerning Jeony-in Shin and Seung-hyeon Baek, at para 43-49, A/HRC/WGAD/2018/40, 17 September 2018), and which has now been recognised by the Constitutional Court of Korea and the Supreme Court of Korea (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/01/world/asia/south-korea-conscientious-objectors.html> (accessed 3 February 2020)).