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Institute Condemns Ban on Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Institute Condemns Barring of Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow

Washington, D.C. – The Institute on Religion and Public Policy condemns a court ruling that bars the Jehovah's Witnesses from Practicing in Moscow. The court ruled that practices of the Jehovah's Witnesses broke up families, encouraged suicide and threatened its members' health by not allowing blood transfusions.

"This decision is a travesty for democracy and freedom of religion in Russia," stated Institute President **Joseph K. Grieboski**. "This decision will have lasting impact on religious belief and practice across Russia and the neighboring states."

The proceedings against the Jehovah's Witnesses began in September 1998 but was suspended six months later as the court asked experts to examine literature published by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

In February 2001 a Moscow court refused to ban the local activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses. An appeals court later that year overturned this ruling, allowing prosecutors to relaunch proceedings against them.

"With fall of the Soviet Union, Communism has been replaced as the national ideology with Orthodox Christianity," continued Mr. Grieboski. "This transition is dangerous for both church and state in Russia."

There are 11, 000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Moscow and more than 133,000 throughout Russia.