PRESS RELEASE


On Thursday April 1, 2021, at 13:00, at the press center of the Rosbalt Media Agency, a press conference dedicated to the 70th Anniversary of Operation North will be held. On April 1, 1951, the Stalinist deportation of an entire religious community—Jehovah’s Witnesses—took place. In unbearable conditions 9,793 people were exiled from six Soviet republics to a region deep in the Siberian forest between Tomsk and Irkutsk. Their homes and possessions were confiscated.

Declassified archive materials, including messages from state security ministers to Stalin himself, shed light on the logic and mechanisms of repression.

Questions planned for discussion at the press conference:

How was such a huge special operation planned? How did Operation North differ from other deportations of the Stalin era? Did the deportation achieve its aims? How did the Jehovah’s Witnesses cope with the deportation? What role did anti-religious propaganda play in the everyday life of the country? How have religious politics changed in the country up to our time? What attracted the attention of modern-day Russian law enforcement agencies to Jehovah’s Witnesses? How does the size of the modern-day actions compare with those of the 1950s? What consequences does repression have for the state in the short-term and from an historical perspective?

A documentary film entitled “The 70th Anniversary of Operation North” will be presented.

Participants in the press conference:

- Artur Artemyev, religious expert, Doctor of Philosophy
- Valery Borshchev, human rights advocate, Co-Chairman of the Moscow Helsinki Group
- Valentin Gefter, member of the Expert Council under the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Russia
- Sergei Ivanenko, religious expert, Doctor of Philosophy
- Yaroslav Sivulsky, European Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses
- Aleksandr Verkhovsky, member of the Russian Federation Presidential Council for Human Rights

Due to anti-COVID-19 measures, the places available at the Rosbalt-Moscow building are limited.

Accreditation of journalists:
Telephone/fax +7 (495) 690-16-38, +7 (926) 244-63-95 E-mail: es@msk.rosbalt.ru

The press conference will be broadcast on Youtube in both Russian and English.
For Russian: https://youtu.be/8qJbjY4RMKQ
For English: https://youtu.be/aWEa7fFWyTA

Questions for the participants can be sent via WhatsApp (+7 9654158503)