

KYRGYZSTAN: Five Reform Adventists in 2-month pre-trial detention

Late on 17 June, a Bishkek court ordered five members of the now-banned True and Free Reform Seventh-day Adventist Church held in pre-trial detention for two months. The three men and two women face criminal charges of "Production and distribution of extremist materials". If convicted as a group, each faces 5 to 7 years' imprisonment. A Bishkek-based commentator warns that the case "could establish a concerning precedent". Police Investigator Adilet Asanbayev says more Church members will be investigated. "This is a real threat to at least 20 others," says one Church member.

Shortly before midnight in the evening of 17 June, a Judge at Bishkek's Birinchi May (Pervomaisky) District Court ordered five members of the now-banned True and Free Reform Seventh-day Adventist Church held in pre-trial detention for two months - until 15 August. The five – three men and two women – face criminal charges of "Production and distribution of extremist materials". The case appears to relate to material the Church members had on their phones. If convicted of acting as a group, each faces a jail term of 5 to 7 years and a possible post-prison ban on specific activity.



Birinchi May (Pervomaisky) District Court, Bishkek

Jehovah's Witnesses

Police are holding Yevgeny Zhuravsky, Igor Kozlov, Sergey Kozlov, Olga Selova and Valeriya Yantsen at Bishkek's Prison No. 21 (see below).

Police Investigator Adilet Asanbayev of Bishkek's Birinchi May District Police opened the criminal investigation on 13 April, just four days after the National Security Committee (NSC) secret police deported the head of the Church in Kyrgyzstan, Pastor Pavel Shreider, after his prison term was changed to a fine. Investigator Asanbayev formally launched a criminal case against the five Adventists on 15 June. Forum 18 was unable to reach Investigator Asanbayev (see below).

Based on information from an officer of the Police Counter Extremism and Illegal Migration Service, a 28 May court decision authorising a house search claimed that True and Free Adventists continue to meet and "abide by methods of caution and conspiracy" (see below).

On Saturday 6 June, police raided at least seven homes of Church members in and around Bishkek where small groups of Church members had gathered (Saturday is a holy day for Adventists). Officers searched the homes and seized documents and mobile telephones. Officers then detained several of the Adventists and took them for questioning. They released all of them later that day (see below).

On 15 June, police summoned some of the True and Free Reform Adventists questioned earlier for further interrogation. Officers focused on whether the individuals had Church publications which officials had deemed "extremist". Police held the five for 48 hours. Investigator Asanbayev then applied to court to have them held for two months (see below).

Investigator Asanbayev told Church members he will look into the activity of other Church members and summon them for interrogation. He said he was looking to charge suspects as a group. "This is a real threat to at least 20 others," one Church member told Forum 18 (see below).

Another Church member describes the raids, searches and arrests as "a new wave of persecution". "The process of overturning the decision made against a church organisation illegally accused of extremism has not yet been completed," the Church member told Forum 18. "And now the remaining believing brothers and sisters have been subjected to further repression."

Forum 18 asked the Interior Ministry Press Service in Bishkek why Police launched the April raids, interrogations and criminal case against True and Free Adventists who have not committed violence against anyone or called for violence against anyone. Forum 18 has received no response to its questions (see below).

Deputy Chair Meder Karabayev and Chief Specialist Alisher Alybayev of the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations in Bishkek did not answer their phones each time Forum 18 called (see below).

A Bishkek-based commentator who has been following the case warns that it "could establish a concerning precedent". "There is a risk that such legal frameworks may be broadly applied to restrict the activities of unregistered religious minorities and penalise their members under the guise of combating extremism" (see below)

On 19 March 2025, Alamudin District Court in Chuy Region banned the True and Free Reform Adventist Church as an "extremist" religious organisation. The Supreme Court in Bishkek later rejected the Church's appeal against the ban. Indira Aslanova, Senior Expert of the Centre for Religious Studies, an independent organisation in Bishkek, described accusing the True and Free Adventists of "extremism" as "absurd" (see below).

The NSC secret police arrested Pastor Shreider in Bishkek in November 2024. Officers searched his home and those of about 10 other church members. They seized thousands of books, including Bibles, as well as cash and mobile phones. The NSC returned the books in 2025 (see below).

After their arrest, NSC secret police officers tortured Pastor Shreider and another detained church member Igor Tsoy during interrogations. "I was given blows on my head, chest and given kicks in my spine from behind by five officers," Pastor Shreider wrote in a November 2024 complaint. No one has been punished for the torture (see below).

On 10 July 2025, nearly three months after his criminal trial began, Bishkek's Birinchi May District Court jailed Pastor Shreider for three years, to be followed by deportation. The Supreme Court in Bishkek changed the rest of his prison term to a fine of 3 months' average wage on 25 March 2026. He was freed the same day but was soon deported (see below).

Among other prisoners of conscience jailed for exercising freedom of religion or belief, 37-year-old Muslim prisoner of conscience Asadullo Madraimov was freed from prison on 25 March after completing his sentence. He was punished for criticising the authorities for closing Kara-Suu District's Al-Sarakhsi Mosque in the southern Osh Region. He visited his lawyer Khusanbai Saliyev in Osh days after his release. "He told me he has lost his health, and in our country, medical rehabilitation projects have been closed," Saliyev told Forum 18 (see below).

Others jailed for exercising freedom of religion or belief



Asadullo Madraimov, Osh, 3 April 2026

Khusanbai Saliyev

In addition to members of the True and Free Reform Seventh-day Adventist Church, the regime has jailed others for exercising freedom of religion or belief.

Muslim prisoner of conscience Asadullo Ibrakhimovich Madraimov (born 22 July 1988) was arrested in October 2023 and [jailed for three years](#) in February 2024. He was punished for criticising the authorities for closing Kara-Suu District's Al-Sarakhsi Mosque in the southern Osh Region. He was [freed on 25 March 2026](#) at the end of his sentence. (Each day in pre-trial detention before a verdict comes into force counts as two days of a sentence.)

On 3 April, ten days after his release, Madraimov visited his lawyer Khusanbai Saliyev in Osh. "He told me he has lost his health, and in our country, medical rehabilitation projects have been closed," Saliyev told Forum 18 the same day.

Another member of the Al-Sarakhsi Mosque community, Mamirzhan Tashmatov, was [freed from prison](#) in May 2024.

In July 2023, a court jailed Protestant Aytbek Tynaliyev [for 6 months](#) for allegedly "inciting religious enmity" for social media posts sharing his faith.

On 4 December 2019, the National Security Committee (NSC) secret police [opened a criminal case](#) against so far unspecified members of the Jehovah's Witness national centre in Bishkek under Article 313, Part 2, Point 2 of the Criminal Code then in force. This punishes "Incitement of racial, ethnic, national, religious or inter-regional enmity (discord) conducted by a group of people in a prior conspiracy" with jail terms.

Forum 18 asked the NSC secret police in writing on 26 March 2026 (re-sent on 26 May):

- Whether the criminal case is continuing or has been closed;
- If it has been closed, when it was closed; and
- Why local Jehovah's Witnesses have not been kept informed of the course of this criminal investigation.

Forum 18 had received no response by the end of the working day in Bishkek of 18 June.

Forum 18 asked the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations in Bishkek in writing on 26 March 2026 why the regime jails individuals – including Madraimov, Tashmatov and Tynaliyev – for exercising freedom of religion or belief. Forum 18 had received no answer to its question by the end of the working day in Bishkek of 18 June.

True and Free Reform Seventh-day Adventist Church among banned communities



True and Free Reform Adventist church, Lenin, Chuy Region
Private

The True and Free Reform Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kyrgyzstan is part of a reform movement within Adventism that emerged during the Soviet period. (It is separate from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its headquarters in the United States.) One of its leaders, prisoner of conscience Vladimir Shelkov, [died in a Soviet labour camp in 1980](#).

The Church – which was led by Pastor Pavel Shreider – chooses not to seek state registration. Exercising freedom of religion or belief without state registration is [illegal and](#)

[punishable.](#)

The Church can no longer meet for worship because of the ban. It previously met in its place of worship in the village of Lenin in Alamudun District of Chuy Region, just north of Bishkek. Officials have not seized the place of worship.

The regime has previously [banned Ahmadi Muslims, and cancelled the state registration or a Falun Gong association.](#)

The NSC secret police raided the Bishkek congregation of the Council of Churches during a harvest festival worship meeting in September 2025 and police [summarily fined two congregation leaders](#). Officers again raided the church's Sunday meeting for worship on 19 April 2026. Police [handed a summary fine to the Pastor](#). NSC secret police officers have visited at least one other Council of Churches congregation in 2026.

Police raid Adventist homes

On 13 April, just four days after the secret police deported Pastor Pavel Shreider, police opened a criminal investigation related to members of the True and Free Reform Adventist Church. The Investigator is Adilet Asanbayev of the Police of Bishkek's Birinchi May (Pervomaisky) District.

On 28 May, Judge Eldarbek Mamyrov of Birinchi May District Court approved Investigator Asanbayev's request to conduct house searches of Church members as part of the criminal investigation, according to one of the decisions seen by Forum 18.

The court decision notes that A. Kurmanbekov, an officer of the Police Counter Extremism and Illegal Migration Service, submitted a written report to Birinchi May District Police on 13 April. He claimed he had received "operational information" that a group of people from Bishkek and the villages of Mayevka and Lenin had "spread the ideology of the extremist organisation" of the True and Free Reform Adventist Church. The criminal investigation was launched on this basis.

Kurmanbekov claimed that "operational investigative measures" had established that Church members continued to meet at Church leaders' homes on Saturdays (the holy day for Adventists).

"To coordinate their activity," the court decision reads, "personal contacts, messaging apps and closed communication groups are used, through which participants share information about the place and time of meetings, and abide by methods of caution and conspiracy, whereby they leave a house in small groups of two or three people with an interval, and on leaving a house they look around so as not to attract attention from a large number of people."

On Saturday 6 June, police raided at least seven homes of Church members in and around Bishkek where small groups of Church members had gathered, those close to the Church told Forum 18. Officers searched the homes and seized documents and mobile telephones. Officers then detained several of the Adventists and took them for questioning. They

released all of them later that day.

Church members then found out about the case under Criminal Code Article 332 ("Production and distribution of extremist materials").

Following the raids, several of those questioned fled the country.

Interrogations, arrests



Yevgeny Zhuravsky

Private

On 12 June, the Justice Ministry's State Service for Judicial Expert Analysis completed its "expert analysis" of books seized from Church members. This noted that Church members refuse military service. "When in the army, people cannot be simultaneously faithful to their faith and to the orders of their superiors," the analysis quotes a Church book as declaring. It claims that a text describes Church members as the "people of God" who are "opposed to people of secular views". It adds that "religious convictions are placed above service to the country and civic duty".

On 15 June, police summoned some of the True and Free Reform Adventists questioned earlier for further interrogation. Officers focused on whether the individuals had Church publications which officials had deemed "extremist".

Initially police summoned Church member Yevgeny Zhuravsky. They decided to hold him for 48 hours until a court could approve his pre-trial detention. Towards evening that day, police summoned other Church members for questioning, including Igor Kozlov, Sergey Kozlov, Olga Selova and Valeriya Yantsen. The four were similarly placed in 48-hour detention (at least one of them at 2 am on 16 June). Officers threatened to hunt down Church members who had fled abroad.

On 15 June, Investigator Adilet Asanbayev of Bishkek's Birinchi May District Police formally launched a criminal case against the five Church members, according to court documents.

Officers again searched Church members' homes and confiscated literature. They returned most of it, but sent some for "expert analysis".

Officers were investigating those detained under Criminal Code Article 332, Part 1. This punishes "Production, distribution, transportation or forwarding of extremist materials, or

their acquisition or storage for the purpose of distribution, the use of symbols or attributes of extremist organisations, as well as through the Internet or mass media". Punishments are a jail term of 3 to 5 years, with or without a subsequent ban on specific activity for up to 3 years.

"The Article talks about 'storage for the purpose of distribution'," one Church member told Forum 18. "There was no actual distribution, it's just that they found these items on their phones. And now they're applying this Article to it."



Janysh Barakov, 1 April 2026

Azattyk.org (RFE/RL)

The Investigator is seeking to upgrade the charges to Criminal Code Article 332, Part 2. This punishes those acting as a group and bears a prison term of 5 to 7 years, with or without a subsequent ban on specific activity for up to 3 years.

The Bishkek lawyer Janysh Barakov is defending the five Adventists.

Officials at Birinchi May District Police would not put Forum 18 through on 18 June to Investigator Adilet Asanbayev, but gave his mobile number. However, Asanbayev did not answer.

Forum 18 asked the Interior Ministry Press Service in Bishkek in writing on the afternoon of 18 June why Police launched the April raids, interrogations and criminal case against True and Free Adventists who have not committed violence against anyone or called for violence against anyone. Forum 18 also asked for contacts of the Interior Ministry's Counter Extremism and Illegal Migration Service. The Press Service responded later in the day, asking for Forum 18 to submit its questions officially in writing. Forum 18 re-sent the questions in writing. Forum 18 had received no response by the end of the working day in Bishkek of 18 June.

Deputy Chair Meder Karabayev and Chief Specialist Alisher Alybayev of the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations in Bishkek did not answer their phones each time Forum 18 called on 18 June. An Agency official refused to give Forum 18 the direct number of the other Deputy Chair, Aybek Iminov.

"This situation warrants close monitoring, as it could establish a concerning precedent," a Bishkek-based commentator who has been following the case told Forum 18 on 18 June. "There is a risk that such legal frameworks may be broadly applied to restrict the activities of unregistered religious minorities and penalise their members under the guise of

combating extremism."

Court orders pre-trial detention



Investigation Prison No. 21, Bishkek, December 2024

Maksat Kutmanbekov (RFE/RL)

Police Investigator Adilet Asanbayev presented the pre-detention requests against the five True and Free Reform Adventists - Yevgeny Zhuravsky, Igor Kozlov, Sergey Kozlov, Olga Selova and Valeriya Yantsen - to Bishkek's Birinchi May (Pervomaisky) District Court. Late in the evening of 17 June, Judge Aida Zhogoshtiyeva ordered all five held in pre-trial detention for two months as the investigation proceeds - until 15 August. The Judge issued the decision at about 11:30 pm.

Officials then took the five Adventists to Bishkek Prison No. 21. Their address:

720005 Bishkek,
Oktyabr District,
Geologicheskij pereulok 2,
Uchrezhdenie No. 21 Ispolneniya Nakazaniy

"This is a real threat to at least 20 others"

Police Investigator Adilet Asanbayev told True and Free Reform Adventists on 16 June that he will look into the activity of other Church members and summon them for interrogation. He said he was looking to charge suspects as a group.

"This is a real threat to at least 20 others," one Church member told Forum 18.

Regime crushes True and Free Reform Adventist Church



National Security Committee, Bishkek, November 2015

Google

The National Security Committee (NSC) secret police arrested the head of the True and Free Adventist Church, Pavel Davidovich Shreider (born 10 January 1960), in Bishkek in November 2024. Officers [searched his home and those of about 10 other church members](#). They seized thousands of books, including Bibles, as well as cash and mobile phones.

The NSC secret police later returned the 2,196 books they confiscated during the November 2024 raids. The NSC handed back about 80 per cent of the books in spring 2025. It returned the rest in September 2025.

After their arrest, NSC secret police officers tortured Pastor Shreider and another detained church member Igor Tsoy during interrogations. "I was given blows on my head, chest and given kicks in my spine from behind by five officers," Pastor Shreider wrote in a November 2024 complaint to the then National Centre for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Bishkek. Officers "hit me with an iron pipe to force me to confess that I committed crimes".

NSC secret police officers used a stun gun to try to coerce Tsoy to write a statement against Pastor Shreider, causing multiple injuries. However, Tsoy refused to do so.

The then National Centre for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment claimed that the torture cannot be corroborated. Officials who participated in the arrest and investigation of Pastor Shreider [denied that officers tortured Pastor Shreider and church member Tsoy](#).

Under the [United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#), Kyrgyzstan is obliged both to arrest any person suspected on good grounds of having committed, instigated or acquiesced to torture "or take other legal measures to ensure his [sic] presence", and also to try them under criminal law which makes "these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature".

Court bans True and Free Reform Adventists as "extremist"



Indira Aslanova, 2 October 2023

Brent Belnap/International Center for Law and Religion Studies

On 19 March 2025, Alamudin District Court in Chuy Region [banned the True and Free Reform Adventist Church](#) as an "extremist" religious organisation. The civil case had been brought by Chuy Region Prosecutor's Office with the close involvement of the NSC secret police.

Indira Aslanova, Senior Expert of the Centre for Religious Studies, an independent organisation in Bishkek, [told Forum 18 in July 2025](#) that accusing the True and Free Adventists of "extremism" is "absurd".

On 4 August 2025, Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court in Bishkek [rejected the appeal against the ban](#). The Supreme Court upheld the ban permanently, and there is no possibility of challenging it in Kyrgyzstan.

In September 2025, church members lodged a further appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva, church members told Forum 18.

In 2025, officials added the True and Free Adventist Church to the "list of organisations deemed terrorist and extremist by the courts" on the websites of the General Prosecutor's Office and the Justice Ministry's Probation Department. The General Prosecutor's Office also includes on its list of "informational materials deemed extremist by the courts" unnamed "printed and electronic versions of materials (books)" produced by the Church, based on the March 2025 Alamudin District Court decision.

As of 18 June 2026, the True and Free Adventist Church does not appear on the list of banned "destructive, extremist and terrorist organisations" on the website of the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations. Nor does it appear on a list on the website of the National Security Committee (NSC) secret police.

Forum 18 [asked](#) the National Agency for Religious Affairs and Interethnic Relations in Bishkek in writing on 26 March whether the True and Free Adventist Church is still banned and, if so, why. Forum 18 pointed out that the Church is not listed on the National Agency website as banned. Forum 18 had received no answer to its questions by the end of the working day in Bishkek of 18 June.

Arrested Pastor Shreider transferred to prison medical unit because of brain damage

From his arrest in November 2024, Pastor Pavel Shreider [was held for 10 months](#) under NSC secret police supervision at Prison No. 21 in Bishkek.

Major Azat Kudaybergenov, Chief of Prison No. 21, told Pastor Shreider's family on 22 September 2025 that he had been "examined multiple times by doctors at Institution No. 21, and diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) with cephalic syndrome. Stage 2 cerebrovascular insufficiency of mixed origin, with cognitive impairment."

The family told Forum 18 that they believe that "several factors" may have contributed to Pastor Shreider's condition. "Firstly, he is of an older age. The prison regime is not conducive for his body movement or exercise and his blood circulation is bad. Secondly, he probably has stress every day because of his arrest. And lastly and maybe most importantly, he was beaten by the police officers when he was arrested and given blows to his head."

Pastor Shreider's conviction, first unsuccessful appeal



Pastor Pavel Shreider, Birinchi May (Pervomaisky) District Court, Bishkek, 17 April 2025
Vera Shreider

On 10 July 2025, nearly three months after his criminal trial began, Bishkek's Birinchi May (Pervomaisky) District Court [convicted Pastor Pavel Shreider](#) on charges of "incitement of racial, ethnic, national, religious, or regional enmity". Judge Ubaydulla Satimkulov jailed the then 65-year-old Pastor for three years in a general regime labour camp. The Judge ordered his deportation to Russia at his own cost at the end of the prison term.

Pastor Shreider's post-prison deportation was ordered on the basis of Article 70 of the Criminal Code: "After serving their sentence, a foreign citizen or stateless person shall be deported from the Kyrgyz Republic in accordance with the procedure established by international treaties that have entered into force in accordance with the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic."

Pastor Shreider was born in the village of Orlovka (now Ak-Dobo) in Talas Region of Soviet Kyrgyzstan. He was living in Russia at the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and gained Russian citizenship.

Pastor Shreider's defence lawyer Akmat Alagushev lodged an appeal against his conviction and jail term to Bishkek City Court on 7 August 2025. On 23 October 2025, the Court left Pastor Shreider's sentence unchanged.

Supreme Court changes Shreider's jail term to a fine, deportation order unchanged



Supreme Court, Bishkek, March 2026

Azattyk.org (RFE/RL)

After Bishkek City Court rejected Pastor Shreider's first appeal, he lodged a final appeal to the Supreme Court in Bishkek.

On 25 March 2026, a panel of three Judges at the Supreme Court [left Pastor Shreider's conviction unchanged](#), including the deportation order, according to the initial decision seen by Forum 18.

However, the Supreme Court changed the remainder of Pastor Shreider's prison term to a fine of 150,000 Soms. This represents about three months' average local wage for those in formal work. The hearing was open and family and church members were able to attend.

Officials prepared documentation and [released Pastor Shreider](#) later on 25 March.

Pastor Shreider reluctantly paid the fine on 9 April, hours before NSC secret police officers deported him. Only then did Supreme Court officials hand over the full 25 March written decision.

NSC secret police deports Pastor Shreider

On 9 April, officers who said they were from the National Security Committee (NSC) secret police deported Pastor Pavel Shreider. "They put him in a car, took him to the land border and banned him from re-entering the country," someone who knows him [told Forum 18 in May](#). "There were no deportation documents and they put no mark in his [Russian] passport."

Pastor Shreider's wife Nelya was not ordered deported, but chose to leave the country

separately the same day.

Pastor Shreider was due to pay for his own deportation, but the NSC secret police officers did not demand any money on deportation day.

UN Special Rapporteurs' concern over Adventists' torture, arrests, prosecution

On 23 July 2025, five United Nations Special Rapporteurs – including Nazila Ghanea, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief – wrote to the regime ([AL KGZ 4/2025](#)) about the "arrests, detentions and alleged torture" of members of the True and Free Reform Adventist Church, as well as the subsequent criminal prosecution of Pastor Pavel Shreider.

The Special Rapporteurs also noted the 19 March 2025 court ruling banning the True and Free Reform Adventist Church as "extremist".

"While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we wish to express our serious concerns regarding the arrest, detention and prosecution of Mr. Pavel Schreider, along with the alleged use of torture and other ill-treatment against Messrs. Pavel Schreider, Igor Tsoi, Sergei Sharvan, and Yuri Pauls," the Special Rapporteurs wrote. They pointed out that "If the above allegations would prove to be accurate, they would be in contravention" of various articles of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR).

"Serious allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been made with regard to Mr. Schreider and the other male members of the congregation during their detention," the Special Rapporteurs told the regime. "It is reported that the male and female members of the group witnessed SNCS officers striking the heads and bodies of the seven male members of the group, including Mr. Schreider, Mr. Pauls, Mr. Igor Tsoi, Mr. Peter Petkau, all of whom reported ill-treatment in detention. It is reported that Mr. Schreider and Mr. Tsoi were additionally subjected to strangulation with cellophane bags and the use of tasers."

The Special Rapporteurs also asked the regime how Pastor Shreider's prosecution and the court-imposed ban on the Church are "compatible with the international human rights obligations", including under the ICCPR. They also asked what measures had been taken to "investigate the credible accusations" of torture against the four Church members.

Regime's response to UN Special Rapporteurs claims actions "in accordance with national law", international treaties

The regime's [20 September 2025 response](#) to the UN Special Rapporteurs merely recounted the prosecution case against Pastor Shreider and the ban on the Church. It

insisted that "the ban on the activities of the aforementioned association and the criminal prosecution of its individual members are carried out in accordance with national law and the international treaties to which the Kyrgyzstan is a party".

The regime's response also dismissed concerns about Pastor Shreider's health condition in prison.

Two Adventists under criminal investigation allowed to leave

In 2024, National Security Committee (NSC) secret police investigators in Bishkek launched a criminal investigation into two other members of the True and Free Adventist Church, Igor Tsoy and Yuri Pauls. Officials had tortured both men following the 2024 raids on community members (see above). The investigator banned them both from leaving the country.

Although the investigation started over alleged pressure to fraudulently acquire individuals' property, it soon transferred to an investigation of the Church. The NSC secret police undertook an investigation into the "underground organisation". This also involved a "religious/linguistic expert analysis".

On 24 April 2025, Bishkek NSC secret police Investigator Siymik Bolotov issued a decision (seen by Forum 18) not to open a criminal case against Tsoy and Pauls "connected with the absence of the component of a crime". He noted that an instruction for information from NSC secret police officers in Bishkek had not received a response.

After repeated requests, the Investigator lifted the travel bans on Tsoy and Pauls, and both left Kyrgyzstan in 2025.

"The criminal investigation into the two men has been halted, but has not been closed," a Church member told Forum 18.

NSC Investigator Bolotov did not answer his phone each time Forum 18 called on 18 June 2026. (END)

[More reports on freedom of thought, conscience and belief in Kyrgyzstan](#)

For more background, see [Forum 18's Kyrgyzstan religious freedom survey](#)

Forum 18's [compilation of Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\) freedom of religion or belief commitments](#)

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