

# Russian forces occupy seventh Baptist church in Ukraine

October 17, 2023

Russian occupying forces seized another Baptist church in Ukraine, and a military court in Russia imprisoned a Baptist who refused to fight in Ukraine on religious grounds, [Forum 18 News](#) reported.

Forum 18, an Oslo-based partner of the [Norwegian Helsinki Committee](#), reported Russian military closed and seized a Baptist Union church in the Zaporizhzia Region of southeastern Ukraine.

The Zaporizhzia Region church is the seventh Baptist Union church confiscated in territory captured since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The other six churches seized previously by Russian occupying forces are in Ukraine's Donetsk Region.

[Voice of the Martyrs](#) reported Russian authorities claimed a mine had been planted at the Zaporizhzia Region Baptist church.

Forum 18 quoted Artyom Sharlay of Russian's Religious Organizations Department as asserting "law-abiding" faith communities "face no restrictions, but those that break the law are banned."

In addition to the Baptist Union church, Russian occupying forces also forcibly closed an Orthodox Church of Ukraine parish in Basab and a Roman Catholic church in Skadovsk.

## Russia jails conscientious objectors

Meanwhile in Russia, Baptist Vyacheslav Reznichenko began a two-and-a-half-year prison term at a prison colony-settlement because he refused to

participate in the military occupation of Ukraine, Forum 18 reported.

Reznichenko, a reservist in Vladivostok, was called up in September 2022. He reportedly told his commanders twice he refused to use weapons against another person, based on his religious convictions.

He was denied the option to perform alternative civilian service or act in an unarmed role in the army, although that right constitutionally is granted to conscientious objectors.

Forum 18 reported Reznichenko is one of four men jailed by Russian military courts for refusing to fight in Ukraine on religious grounds. Two already serving sentences in penal colony-settlements are Dmitry Vasilets, a Buddhist, and Andrey Kapatsyna, a Pentecostal Christian.

Another Pentecostal, Maksim Makushin, was sentenced Sept. 28 to two years and eight months. He is appealing his case.