

## **Prominent Russian Punk Rocker Defects to U.S. Over Jehovah's Witnesses Ban**

### **World**

Posted by:

Posted on : 2017/8/2 14:34:34

#### **Russian musician Fyodor Chistyakov (file photo)**

From RFE/RL, July 31, 2017 Prominent Russian punk rocker Fyodor Chistyakov says he has decided not to return from the United States, citing Russia's new ban on the Jehovah's Witnesses. A member of the religious denomination since the mid-1990s, Chistyakov told Novaya Gazeta in a telephone interview from New York published on July 31 that he "has no other choice" than to stay in the United States. "I cannot openly follow my religion [in Russia] now. And that is a trauma itself even when I am not in jail, although incarcerations are taking place already," he was quoted as saying. Chistyakov, who is known as Dyadya Fyodor (Uncle Fyodor) and has led the groups Nol (Zero) and the Fyodor Chistyakov Band, has been on tour in the United States for several months. The Russian Supreme Court ruled in April that the Jehovah's Witnesses were an extremist organization and prohibited them from operating in Russia. The court [upheld the ruling](#) on appeal in July. Freedom of religion is formally guaranteed in Russia but legislation sets out Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism as the country's four traditional religions, and smaller denominations frequently face discrimination. In recent years, there have been a growing number of reports of worshippers at Jehovah's Witnesses congregations being targeted for harassment. [⋮] <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-punk-ch...h-witnesses/28650645.html>