

July 1, 2004: Russia: Religious Freedom at Crossroads

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2004

Contact:

Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27

Please join us for a video presentation featuring an interview with Aleksandr Chuev, a Russian parliament (Duma) deputy. Chuev has said that Russia needs to do more to punish what he calls religious "blasphemy," and that the Duma should adopt an amendment specifically aimed at punishing those who insult "traditional" religious beliefs. The video will be followed by a discussion with Lawrence Uzzell, who is a noted expert on religion in Russia.

In May of this year, a Russian parliamentary committee considered possible amendments to the law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations, including one amendment drafted by Chuev. That law, adopted in 1997, contains highly burdensome registration requirements that impeded the ability of smaller and newer religious groups to gain registration and function fully, but also implied preference to organizations deemed to be "traditional" to Russia. Chuev's proposed amendment would potentially further codify a hierarchy of religious organizations in Russia.

WHO: Lawrence Uzzell, President of International Religious Freedom Watch, former head of the Keston Institute, and a 1998 Pulitzer Prize nominee for his reporting on Russia's 1997 law restoring state control over religious life.

WHEN: 3:00 - 4:30 pm, Wednesday, July 7, 2004

WHERE: The Offices of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom,

800 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 790, Washington, DC 20002

** Seating is limited, so please RSVP by calling David Park at
(202) 523-3240, ext. 38 or email dpark@uscirf.gov **