

Roman's Story

Roman Zuiev (from Donezk, Ukraine) was born and raised in a family of Jehovah's Witnesses in the USSR, where religious activity was prohibited and Jehovah's Witnesses were one of the most persecuted religious organizations.

At the age of 12 he was baptized, and at 14 he was already an elder of his congregation because all other men were in prison for their faith. In the congregation only sisters and children remained, but they could not be leaders because of the denomination's practices.

When he was 22, he was dissociated from the congregation because he is gay, despite his strong dedication to its mission. He came in contact with Mormons, but with the same consequences.

He describes his experiences:

After I was excluded from my religious community, I became an activist for the human rights of gay Christians. In January 2010 I was brutally beaten by a homophobic policeman, who broke my jaw and caused other bodily injuries of medium gravity. I brought this man to court, and he was sentenced to 2 years conditionally, losing his job. This case became very famous and was discussed by mass media. I am the first Ukrainian gay in history who brought an issue of sexual discrimination to court.

After that, I founded the Church of Saint Cornelius, a Christian community for LGBT Christians. One of our first services was invaded by radical right-wing extremists who threw smoke bombs. Two days later my apartment was burned, and two roommates died in the fire. I only saved my life, because I was not at home when it happened. The police didn't investigate the case properly.

As the Church of Saint Cornelius continued, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Ukrainian Church and other Churches put pressure on State authorities to destroy our church and our activities as a dangerous menace for our nation. When I became aware of it, I decided to leave the Ukraine. Now I am in the Netherlands, asking for political asylum, but until now without success.