

Russian court fines popular, virus-denying Orthodox monk

by [Vladimir Isachenkov](#) in the [August 26, 2020](#) issue



(AP Photo/Vladimir Podoksyonov)

On July 20, a Russian court ordered Father Sergiy, an influential monk who has denied the existence of the new coronavirus and urged his followers to ignore government lockdown orders, to pay a fine for fomenting enmity through his sermons.

When contagion engulfed Russia, Father Sergiy, whose given name is Nikolai Romanov, declared the coronavirus nonexistent and denounced government efforts to stem the pandemic as “Satan’s electronic camp.” In fiery sermons laden with anti-Semitic statements and vitriol against a supposed Masonic world government, the monk has described the vaccines being developed against COVID-19 as part of a global plot to control the masses via electronic chips.

A court in Verkhnyaya Pyshma in the Ural Mountains region found Father Sergiy guilty of inciting hatred and ruled that he should pay a fine of 18,000 rubles (about \$250). The 65-year-old monk didn’t attend Monday’s court hearing.

The church banned Father Sergiy from ministry in April, but he has continued preaching. In June, he took charge of the convent outside Yekaterinburg that he founded years ago. —Associated Press