

Russian rebel monk arrested, charged with inciting suicidal actions

by [Vladimir Isachenkov](#) in the [January 27, 2021](#) issue



(AP Photo/Vladimir Podoksyonov)

Russian riot police stormed into a monastery on December 29 to detain a rebel monk who has castigated the Kremlin and the Russian Orthodox Church leadership and denied the existence of the coronavirus.

On December 29, the 65-year-old monk, known as Father Sergiy, was quickly flown to Moscow and charged with inciting suicidal actions through sermons in which he urged believers to “die for Russia.” He denied the accusations.

When the virus arrived in Russia early this year, Father Sergiy denied its existence and denounced government efforts to stem the pandemic as “Satan’s electronic camp.” He has described the vaccines being developed against COVID-19 as part of a global plot to control the masses via chips.

The monk, who has urged followers to disobey the government’s lockdown measures, had holed up at the monastery near Yekaterinburg that he founded years ago. Dozens of burly volunteers, including veterans of the separatist conflict in Eastern Ukraine, helped enforce his rules, while the prioress and several nuns left.

The Russian Orthodox Church stripped Father Sergiy of his abbot’s rank for breaking monastic rules in July, but he rejected the ruling and ignored police investigators’ summons. Facing stiff resistance by hundreds of his supporters, church officials and local authorities for months appeared reluctant to evict him.

Hundreds of his supporters continued rallying at the monastery hours after he was taken away. Some wept.

Father Sergiy, who was born as Nikolai Romanov, served as a police officer during Soviet times. He was later convicted of murder, robbery, and assault and sentenced to 13 years in prison. He joined a church school after his release and later became a monk.

The charismatic priest quickly became known for his efforts to open new churches and monasteries in the Ural region. In his fiery sermons, he denounced alleged plots of the “world government” and glorified Russia’s last czar, Nicholas II, who was killed by the Bolsheviks along with his entire family in Yekaterinburg in 1918. —Associated Press