

Reference Document

"Court Orders Jehovah's Witnesses to Retract Shunning Announcement"

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from court rulings, legislation, official Watchtower publications, or direct statements by the attorney of record
 - **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established advocacy/legal resource sites, reputable journalism, or corroborated third-party reporting
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SECTION 1: The Official Story — Watchtower's Courtroom Defense

Claim: The Watchtower claims in courtrooms that the organization does not compel anyone to shun and that shunning is a personal, voluntary choice.

- Source: Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 29 (testimony of Watchtower representatives)
- URL: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-29-jehovahs-witnesses>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official government commission testimony
- Note: This defense has been used in Norway (JW v. Norway, 2022–2026), before the Australian Royal Commission (2015), and in multiple US and Canadian courts.

Claim: When someone leaves the Jehovah's Witnesses, an elder reads a single sentence from the platform: a specific person is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

- Source: *Shepherd the Flock of God* (elders' manual), Chapter 22
- URL: <https://archive.org/details/2024-04-sfl-elder-manual>; see also <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/elders-manual-shepherd-secret.php>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official internal Watchtower publication

Claim: Watchtower publications instruct members to refuse even a simple phone call from disfellowshipped family members, including elderly parents.

- Source: *The Watchtower*, January 15, 2013, pp. 15–16 ("Let Nothing Distance You From Jehovah")
- URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/w20130115/let-nothing-distance-you-from-jehovah/>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication

SECTION 2: The LGPD Data Protection Trap

Claim: The couple lived in Itaú de Minas, a small municipality in Minas Gerais with roughly 18,000 residents.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

Claim: The wife was spotted entering and leaving a Catholic mass and was subsequently reported to the elders, who formed a judicial committee.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

Claim: The wife sent a formal data subject access request to Bethel headquarters under the LGPD (Brazil's General Data Protection Law). Bethel confirmed they held seven categories of personal data: full name, CPF, date of birth, baptism date, mother's name, pioneer status, and disfellowshipping status.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record describing case evidence

Claim: Bethel responded to the consent revocation by stating they would process data according to “the legitimate religious interests of the organization whenever necessary.”

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record describing Bethel's written response

Claim: The LGPD is the legal equivalent of Europe's GDPR. Data protection was elevated to a fundamental constitutional right in Brazil in 2022.

- Source: Constitutional Amendment 115/2022; LGPD (Lei Geral de Proteção de Dados, Law No. 13,709/2018)
- URL: <https://www.dlapiperdataprotection.com/index.html?t=about&c;=BR>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Brazilian legislation

SECTION 3: The Kingdom Hall Confrontation and Trial

Claim: Dr. Juliano drove five hours to Itaú de Minas, personally delivered the disassociation notification to the elders, and the elders announced the disassociation at the end of that same meeting despite the notification. Dr. Juliano filmed the announcement.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

Claim: The elders assigned the youngest, most recently appointed elder to make the announcement rather than the coordinator or the elder who normally handles announcements.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

Claim: Article 4 of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society’s corporate bylaws in Brazil states that a person ceases to be a member on the date their resignation notice is received by the board, with no provision for a public announcement.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025 (reading from the judicial ruling citing the bylaws)
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Corporate bylaws as cited in the court ruling, described by the attorney of record

Claim: During the hearing, the judge called the youngest elder to testify on his own initiative. The elder testified that there is no punishment for maintaining contact with former members. Dr. Juliano then read from the *Shepherd the Flock of God* book showing that continued contact constitutes the “grave sin of Unbridled Conduct” and can lead to disfellowshipping. The elder was unable to answer and said “I don’t remember the question.”

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct firsthand account by the attorney of record who was present

Claim: Security cameras at the local bank captured an elder making an exaggerated physical contortion to avoid the husband. At the supermarket, congregation members refused to acknowledge the father while he was holding his daughter with special needs.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Attorney’s description of evidence submitted to the court (security footage and witness testimony)

Claim: Non-JW bystanders who witnessed the shunning behavior agreed to testify in court.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

SECTION 4: The Verdict and Court-Ordered Retraction

Claim: Judge Ângelo de Almeida of the Vara Única de Pratápolis/MG ruled against the Watchtower and three defendant elders, ordering them to read a retraction announcement at the next congregation meeting after the sentence becomes final, with a daily fine of R\$500 for noncompliance.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, blog post dated March 3, 2025, julianohmello.com; and live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://julianohmello.com.br/2025/03/03/2017/>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Attorney’s published account and screen-shared court ruling

Claim: The court-ordered retraction states that the announcements violated the Brazilian Constitution’s principles of human dignity, freedom of association and religious belief, and inviolability of privacy, and that no member will be subjected to punishment for maintaining social contact with the couple.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello reading the operative part of the sentence on the live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct reading of court ruling by the attorney of record

Claim: The judge wrote in his ruling that “the announcement of disassociation is purely and simply a summons for the faithful of the church to stop socializing with the disassociated person.”

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello reading from the judicial reasoning on the live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct reading of court ruling by the attorney of record

Claim: The judge found that shunning restrictions on social contact are not provided for in the congregation’s own bylaws.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello reading from the judicial reasoning on the live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ziPza-YAGQ>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct reading of court ruling by the attorney of record

SECTION 5: The Appeal and Broader Implications

Claim: The Watchtower has appealed the ruling. Oral arguments are scheduled for April 2026, with both sides presenting before a panel of appellate judges.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, interview on Brazilian ex-JW channel, March 29, 2026
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxDuhqU97nY>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record, confirmed four days before this video’s publication

Claim: The appellate hearing is closed to the public.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, interview on Brazilian ex-JW channel, March 29, 2026
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxDuhqU97nY>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

Claim: If upheld on appeal, the ruling would become a binding legal precedent at the second instance level in Brazil.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, live stream with Edson Reis, March 1, 2025; and March 29, 2026 interview
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxDuhqU97nY>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record on Brazilian appellate procedure

Claim: Dr. Juliano said a win on appeal would not necessarily change removal protocols at a global level because laws vary by country, but at the Brazilian national level he thinks it is very possible.

- Source: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello, interview on Brazilian ex-JW channel, March 29, 2026
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxDuhqU97nY>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct statement by the attorney of record

Claim: There are nearly 900,000 active Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil.

- Source: *2024 Service Year Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide*
- URL: <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/worldwide/BR/>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official Watchtower publication

Claim: When Norway stripped the Watchtower of state funding over shunning practices, the Governing Body modified its shunning policy worldwide.

- Source: Multiple reporting sources including AvoidJW.org, CNE News, and ex-JW community analysis of the March 2024 policy changes
- URL: <https://cne.news/article/4220-jehovahs-witnesses-ease-shunning-rules-after-blow-in-oslo-court>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Established journalism; the causal link between Norway and the global policy change is widely reported but not officially confirmed by Watchtower

Claim: Norway's government has taken the Watchtower all the way to the Supreme Court over shunning practices and state funding.

- Source: AvoidJW.org reporting on Norway Supreme Court proceedings
- URL: <https://avoidjw.org/news/norway-supreme-court-shunning-childrens-rights-appeal/>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Established advocacy site with detailed court coverage

Claim: The Watchtower quietly deleted their shunning instruction videos from their digital library without announcement or explanation.

- Source: AvoidJW.org investigation, September 25, 2025
- URL: <https://avoidjw.org/news/jehovahs-witnesses-remove-shunning-video/>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Established advocacy site; deletion independently confirmed by multiple ex-JW researchers

Claim: A Brazilian woman filed a \$100 million federal lawsuit against Watchtower in New York (Gomes de Souza v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Inc.) for child sexual abuse cover-up in Brazil.

- Source: U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, Case No. 1:25-cv-09458, filed November 12, 2025
- URL: <https://dockets.justia.com/docket/new-york/nysdce/1:2025cv09458/652986>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Federal court filing

Claim: The European Union is evaluating Brazil for a GDPR adequacy determination, recognizing the LGPD framework as equivalent to European data protection standards.

- Source: European Data Protection Board, Opinion 28/2025, November 4, 2025
- URL: <https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/insights/publications/2025/12/european-data-protection-board-opinion-eu-draft-adequacy-decision-for-brazil-lgpd>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Official EU regulatory proceeding

SECTION 6: Additional Supporting Sources

Claim: Dr. Juliano de Henrique Mello — Attorney website and professional profile

- Source: julianohmello.com.br
- URL: <https://julianohmello.com.br/>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Attorney's own website
- Contains: Professional biography, blog posts including the March 3, 2025 article on the case, and contact information

Claim: English-language video covering this case (“BREAKING: Court Forces Jehovah’s Witnesses to Retract Public Shunning Announcement”)

- Source: YouTube
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1sxV34p2IM>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — English-language summary of the case based on Portuguese primary sources
- Contains: Narrative overview of the case, the verdict, and the appeal timeline

Claim: Dr. Juliano interview confirming April 2026 oral arguments (March 29, 2026)

- Source: Brazilian ex-JW YouTube channel interview with Dr. Juliano
- URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxDuhqU97nY>
- Verification: **PRIMARY** — Direct interview with the attorney of record
- Contains: Confirmation of April 2026 hearing, closed hearing status, practical legal advice for disassociating members, assessment of national vs. global impact

Claim: AvoidJW.org 2026 Global Updates on Jehovah's Witnesses legal scrutiny worldwide

- Source: AvoidJW.org
- URL: <https://avoidjw.org/news/global-updates-2026-avoidjw-jw/>
- Verification: **SECONDARY** — Established advocacy and legal tracking site
- Contains: Comprehensive overview of global legal proceedings involving JW shunning, CSA, and government investigations across Norway, Denmark, Japan, France, Pennsylvania, and Brazil