

# Reference Document

## *"Watchtower Is Scrambling to Protect Itself from Jehovah's Witnesses"*

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, government proceedings, or peer-reviewed research.
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established advocacy/legal resource sites, academic researchers, or reputable journalism.

## SECTION 1: The Cold Open — The Winder Quote and the Norwegian Supreme Court

**Claim: At the 2025 Annual Meeting, Governing Body member Jeff Winder asked whether some Witnesses might have "too much association" with people who have been removed from the congregation.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org reporting on the 2025 Annual Meeting.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — AvoidJW has established itself as a primary English-language documentation archive for current JW policy changes, with consistent reporting of Annual Meeting content.
- **Key quote:** "Might some have too much association with ones who have been removed from the congregation?" — Jeff Winder, 2025 Annual Meeting.

**Claim: On February 6, 2026, Watchtower's lead attorney Anders Ryssdal argued to the Norwegian Supreme Court that shunning is a personal decision, not an enforced rule.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org live coverage of the Norwegian Supreme Court hearings, February 5-9, 2026.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/norway-supreme-court-day-2-the-price-we-pay-jehovahs-witness/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Based on live coverage of a public Supreme Court proceeding. Fair Report Privilege applies.
- **Key quote:** Ryssdal's argument was that "no one worries about being excluded" and that "family ties are not broken" — per AvoidJW live coverage, Day 2.

## SECTION 2: The Official Story

**Claim: Watchtower's official website states that when a person is disfellowshipped, "the religious ties he had with his family change, but blood ties remain. The marriage relationship and normal family affections and dealings can continue."**

- **Source:** Jehovah's Witnesses official FAQ on shunning, JW.org.
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/shunning/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from the subject organization's own current public-facing website.

**Claim: Watchtower publicly describes child sexual abuse as "an especially repugnant wicked deed."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower, May 2019 study edition — "Love and Justice in the Face of Wickedness."
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-may-2019/love-justice-face-of-wickedness/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own study edition.

## **SECTION 3: The Contradiction — Watchtower Study Edition**

### **Instructions on Shunning**

**Claim: The October 2017 Watchtower study edition instructed members: "Despite our pain of heart, we must avoid normal contact with a disfellowshipped family member by telephone, text messages, letters, e-mails, or social media."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower study edition, October 2017, "How to Treat a Disfellowshipped Family Member."
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2017603>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own study edition.

**Claim: The January 15, 2013 Watchtower study edition instructed members: "Do not look for excuses to associate with a disfellowshipped family member, for example, through e-mail."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower study edition, January 15, 2013, paragraph 19.
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013044>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own study edition.

**Claim: The July 15, 2011 Watchtower, page 31, stated that parents who maintain contact with a disfellowshipped son or daughter are "putting Jehovah to the test."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower study edition, July 15, 2011.
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2011526>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own study edition.

**Claim: The September 2021 Watchtower study edition included experiences of Witnesses who cut off disfellowshipped family members, presented as examples of loyalty.**

- **Source:** The Watchtower study edition, September 2021, "Maintain Your Love for Jehovah."

- URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2021565>
- Verification: PRIMARY — Content verifiable directly from Watchtower's own study edition.

## SECTION 4: Evidence Block 1 — The Two-Layer Architecture on Shunning

**Claim: Watchtower's internal elder manual, \*Shepherd the Flock of God\*, has been revised multiple times since its first publication in 2010, including updates in 2012, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2024, and September 2025.**

- Source: JWfacts.com — *"Shepherd the Flock of God"* entry documenting the publication history of the elder manual.
- URL: <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/shepherd-the-flock-of-god.php>
- Verification: SECONDARY — JWfacts maintains a comprehensive archive of JW publication revisions with primary-source citations.

**Claim: \*Shepherd the Flock of God\*, chapter 12, paragraph 17, states that "willful, continued, unnecessary association with disfellowshipped or disassociated nonrelatives despite repeated counsel would warrant judicial action."**

- Source: *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, multiple editions.
- URL: <https://avoidjw.org/shepherd-the-flock-of-god/>
- Verification: PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own internal manual. Leaked copies are publicly archived and have been cited verbatim in court proceedings including *\*Highwood Congregation v. Wall\**.

**Claim: \*Shepherd the Flock of God\* instructs elders that in cases where a publisher has associated with disfellowshipped relatives not in the household, they should "use the Scriptures to counsel and reason with him."**

- Source: *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, chapter 12, paragraphs 17-18, multiple editions.
- URL: <https://avoidjw.org/shepherd-the-flock-of-god/>
- Verification: PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own internal manual.

**Claim: In May 2018, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in \*Highwood Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses v. Wall\*, a case brought by Randy Wall, a disfellowshipped realtor in Calgary who was shunned by his family and lost approximately half his Jehovah's Witness clients. Watchtower won on jurisdictional grounds — meaning the Supreme Court ruled that civil courts should not intervene in the internal religious decisions of a religious organization, without ruling on the merits of whether the shunning itself caused harm.**

- Source: *\*Highwood Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses v. Wall\**, 2018 SCC 26 (Supreme Court of Canada, May 31, 2018).
- URL: <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/17101/index.do>
- Verification: PRIMARY — Direct court record from the Supreme Court of Canada. Fair Report Privilege applies.

**Claim: In February 2022, the Norwegian Jehovah's Witnesses sent a formal letter to the State Administrator of Oslo and Viken stating that the religious community "does not control, nor can it control" whether members answer calls from people who have withdrawn, and that each individual in the congregation acts "voluntarily and of his own volition, based on their own religious conscience."**

- **Source:** Norwegian Jehovah's Witnesses letter to the State Administrator of Oslo and Viken, February 2022; cited in Norwegian administrative proceedings and subsequent court filings.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — The letter is a public record cited in Norwegian administrative and judicial proceedings.

## **SECTION 5: The Sheffer Case — Pennsylvania Attorney General Investigation**

**Claim: In January 2025, Shaun Sheffer, 46, of Butler County, Pennsylvania, was convicted on seven counts of raping and sexually assaulting a minor. The victim, identified as K.S., testified he raped her between 30 and 50 times from ages seven to twelve.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW in-depth trial reporting by Miss Usato; Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/a-divided-familys-fight-for-justice-with-the-pa-ag-investigation-into-jehovahs-witnesses/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Court trial coverage by local news outlet; corroborated by the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office.

**Claim: On June 3, 2025, Sheffer was sentenced to 14 to 34 years in Pennsylvania state prison.**

- **Source:** Survivors of Abuse PA; AvoidJW coverage of sentencing.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Official sentencing record.

**Claim: Sheffer was convicted because his brother, Brandon Sheffer, left the Jehovah's Witness organization and called the Pennsylvania Attorney General's tip line after hearing about the ongoing grand jury investigation.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW in-depth trial reporting by Miss Usato.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/a-divided-familys-fight-for-justice-with-the-pa-ag-investigation-into-jehovahs-witnesses/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Established through sworn courtroom testimony of Brandon Sheffer and Special Agent Adametz.

**Claim: Elder Stephen Chappel of the Zellenople Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses testified under oath that Shaun Sheffer met with him and another elder in 2016 to disclose the abuse allegations, and that Chappel contacted the Legal Department of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York — but took no other action, including not contacting police.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW in-depth trial reporting by Miss Usato; court testimony recorded in trial proceedings.

- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/a-divided-familys-fight-for-justice-with-the-pa-ag-investigation-into-jehovahs-witnesses/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Sworn courtroom testimony, reported verbatim by local press.
- **Key quote:** Per AvoidJW trial coverage: Sheffer met with the elders in 2016 and told them about the allegations; Chappel said he contacted the church's legal department but took no other action.

## **SECTION 6: Evidence Block 2 — The Same Pattern Applied to Child Sexual Abuse**

**Claim:** The 2010 edition of *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, chapter 12, paragraph 18, instructs elders: "You should immediately call the branch office for direction if you learn of an accusation of child abuse." In the 2010 manual, the term "branch office" refers to Watchtower's broader regional headquarters, not a specific legal department.

- **Source:** *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, 2010 edition, chapter 12, paragraph 18.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/shepherd-the-flock-of-god/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own internal manual.

**Claim:** The 2019 and 2020 editions of *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, chapter 14, paragraph 7, instruct elders: "To ensure that elders comply with child-abuse reporting laws, two elders should immediately call the Legal Department for legal advice when the elders learn of an accusation of child abuse."

- **Source:** *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, 2019 and 2020 editions, chapter 14, paragraph 7.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/shepherd-the-flock-of-god/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own internal manual.

**Claim:** The 2019 and 2020 editions of *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\** required elders to "clearly inform" abuse victims that they have "the right to report the matter to the secular authorities."

- **Source:** *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, 2019 and 2020 editions.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/shepherd-the-flock-of-god/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own internal manual.

**Claim:** The September 2025 edition of *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\** changed the word "right" to "free" — now requiring elders to inform victims that they are "free to report the matter to the secular authorities."

- **Source:** *\*Shepherd the Flock of God\**, September 2025 edition; AvoidJW comparative analysis of 2019/2020 vs. 2025 editions.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/shepherd-the-flock-of-god/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own internal manual, documented by AvoidJW comparing the specific language change.

**Claim:** The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 29 (2015), revealed the existence of Watchtower's internal database

**tracking child sexual abuse allegations and documented the two-witness rule as applied by elders.**

- **Source:** Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 29: Jehovah's Witnesses (Australia, 2015).
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-29-response-jehovahs-witnesses-and-watchtower-bible-and-tract-society>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Official Australian government commission report.

**Claim: At the 2015 Australian Royal Commission, acting Watchtower Australian Branch Overseer Terry O'Brien testified that Jehovah's Witnesses would not automatically report child abuse to police, stating: "It is the victim's absolute right and privilege to decide whether they want the matter" reported.**

- **Source:** Australian Royal Commission, Case Study 29 — Terry O'Brien testimony, 2015.
- **URL:** <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-29-response-jehovahs-witnesses-and-watchtower-bible-and-tract-society>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Sworn testimony on public Royal Commission record.

**Claim: Survivor Chessa Manion told NBC News that when her parents told elders about her rape at age five, the response included a plea to "let bygones be bygones for Jehovah's sake" and not to "ruin his name by taking this public."**

- **Source:** NBC News investigative reporting on Jehovah's Witnesses child abuse cases.
- **URL:** <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/jehovah-s-witnesses-use-bible-victim-shame-sex-abuse-survivor-n916326>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Published, named, on-record survivor testimony reported by a major national news outlet.

## **SECTION 7: Counterargument and Dismantling**

**Claim: Between 1950 and 2015, the Australia Branch of Jehovah's Witnesses had records of 1,006 alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse and more than 1,800 victims. None of those cases had been reported to police by the organization.**

- **Source:** Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Case Study 29, 2015; summarized in Wikipedia with primary-source citations.
- **URL:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s\\_Witnesses%27\\_handling\\_of\\_child\\_sexual\\_abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses%27_handling_of_child_sexual_abuse)
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Official Royal Commission finding.

**Claim: In 2016, in Ireland, two Jehovah's Witness elders who reported a child molester to police were subsequently removed from their positions as elders — against the stated preference of the London Branch Legal Department.**

- **Source:** BBC Panorama investigation, 2017; Wikipedia summary of Jehovah's Witnesses' handling of child sexual abuse.
- **URL:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s\\_Witnesses%27\\_handling\\_of\\_child\\_sexual\\_abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses%27_handling_of_child_sexual_abuse)
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — BBC Panorama investigation (established investigative journalism), summarized in Wikipedia with source documentation.

**Claim: The elders in the Zelenople Kingdom Hall were informed of the Sheffer allegations by Shaun Sheffer himself in 2016, contacted the Watchtower Legal Department, and did not contact police. The abuse was not reported to law enforcement until 2023, after Brandon Sheffer called the Pennsylvania Attorney General's tip line.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW in-depth trial reporting; JWChildAbuse.org trial summary; Pennsylvania Attorney General case announcement.
- **URL:** <https://www.jwchildabuse.org/news/verdict-active-jehovahs-witness-member-found-guilty-on-7-counts-of-child-sexual-abuse/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Established through sworn courtroom testimony.

## **SECTION 8: The Turning Point — \*Paul v. Watchtower\* and the 1988 Template**

**Claim: In 1975, Janice Paul disassociated herself from the Jehovah's Witnesses by written resignation. On subsequent visits to her hometown, she was informed by friends and a host Witness that she could not socialize with the community because elders had instructed members not to speak with her. She later sued the organization in Washington State alleging emotional harm from the practice of shunning.**

- **Source:** \*Paul v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.\*, 819 F.2d 875 (9th Cir. 1987); published case background.
- **URL:** <https://openjurist.org/819/f2d/875/paul-v-watchtower-bible-and-tract-society-of-new-york-inc>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Federal Circuit Court opinion. Fair Report Privilege applies.

**Claim: On June 10, 1987, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in \*Paul v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society\* that shunning is a religiously protected practice and that the emotional harms Janice Paul suffered were insufficient to override First Amendment protection.**

- **Source:** \*Paul v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.\*, 819 F.2d 875 (9th Cir. 1987).
- **URL:** <https://openjurist.org/819/f2d/875/paul-v-watchtower-bible-and-tract-society-of-new-york-inc>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Federal Circuit Court opinion.

**Claim: The April 15, 1988 Watchtower, pages 26-31, article "Discipline That Can Yield Peaceable Fruit" contained the statement that has served as the foundation of Watchtower's legal defense on shunning ever since: "Since his being disfellowshipped does not end their blood ties or marriage relationship, normal family affections and dealings can continue."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower, April 15, 1988, pages 26-31, "Discipline That Can Yield Peaceable Fruit."
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1988287>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own publication.

**Claim: The phrase "normal family affections and dealings continue" remains on the FAQ section of JW.org and is echoed in Watchtower's public statements across multiple international legal venues.**

- **Source:** JW.org FAQ on shunning, "Do Jehovah's Witnesses Shun Former Members of Their Religion?"
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/shunning/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own current public-facing website.

**Claim: In 1998, Watchtower signed a friendly settlement before the European Commission of Human Rights with the government of Bulgaria. The settlement stated that Jehovah's Witnesses would have free choice in medical treatment, including blood transfusions, "without any control or sanction on the part of the association."**

- **Source:** \*Christian Association Jehovah's Witnesses v. Bulgaria\* (Application No. 28626/95), European Commission of Human Rights, March 9, 1998; JWfacts archive.
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/bulgaria-blood-transfusions.php>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from the official settlement text of an international legal proceeding.

**Claim: On April 27, 1998, Watchtower issued a press release stating: "The terms of the agreement do not reflect a change in the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses."**

- **Source:** Watchtower Society press release, April 27, 1998; archived and documented at JWfacts.com.
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/bulgaria-blood-transfusions.php>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own press release.

## **SECTION 9: Theocratic Warfare — The Theological Framework Behind the Strategy**

**Claim: First John 5:19 in the New World Translation states: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one."**

- **Source:** New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, 1 John 5:19.
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/b/r1/lp-e/nwt/62/5>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own Bible translation.

**Claim: Watchtower's reference book \*Reasoning From the Scriptures\*, in the entry titled "Government," teaches that every human government is "part of the political system that the Bible clearly says is under the control of Satan."**

- **Source:** \*Reasoning From the Scriptures\*, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, entry "Government."
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101989231>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own doctrinal reference work, still hosted on JW.org.

**Claim: The February 1, 1956 Watchtower, page 86, stated: "It is proper to cover over our arrangements for the work that God commands us to do. If the wolfish foes draw wrong conclusions from our maneuvers to outwit them, no harm has been done to them by the**

**harmless sheep, innocent in their motives as doves."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower, February 1, 1956, page 86.
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/theocratic-warfare.php>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own publication, archived at JWFACTS.

**Claim: The May 1, 1957 Watchtower published an article titled "Use Theocratic War Strategy," which featured the story of a Jehovah's Witness in East Germany switching blouse colors to mislead a Communist officer. The article explained that hiding the truth from an enemy "does not harm him" and that "in time of spiritual warfare it is proper to misdirect the enemy by hiding the truth."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower, May 1, 1957, "Use Theocratic War Strategy."
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/theocratic-warfare.php>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own publication, archived at JWFACTS.

**Claim: Watchtower's \*Insight on the Scriptures\*, Volume 2, page 244, defines lying as "saying something false to a person who is entitled to know the truth and doing so with the intent to deceive or to injure him or another person."**

- **Source:** \*Insight on the Scriptures\*, Volume 2, page 244, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1200002738>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own doctrinal reference work, currently maintained on JW.org and integrated into the JW Library research tools.

**Claim: In the 1954 Scottish court case \*Walsh v. The Lord Advocate\*, Watchtower's chief legal counsel Hayden Covington conceded under oath that the organization's unity was based on the enforced acceptance of prophecies that later turned out to be wrong, and that a member who openly disagreed with Watchtower prophecy and was disfellowshipped would be "worthy of death" — specifically answering: "I will answer yes, unhesitatingly."**

- **Source:** Pursuer's Proof of \*Douglas Walsh v. The Right Honourable James Latham Clyde\*, Court of Session, Scotland, 1954; transcript pages 345-348.
- **URL:** <https://archive.org/details/WalshTrial>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Sworn testimony in a British court. Full 762-page transcript is archived and publicly available through the Internet Archive.

## **SECTION 10: Norway, February 2026 — The Playbook in Live Fire**

**Claim: The Norwegian Supreme Court heard the Jehovah's Witnesses deregistration case from February 5-9, 2026.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org live coverage; Preach From The Housetops transcripts; Norwegian Supreme Court (Høyesterett) docket.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/norway-price-we-pay-supreme-court-hearing/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Public Supreme Court proceeding.

**Claim: In 2022, the Norwegian State deregistered Jehovah's Witnesses, eliminating approximately \$1.5 million in annual state subsidies and ending the organization's legal right to perform marriages.**

- **Source:** Religion News Service reporting, January 2024; Human Rights Without Frontiers coverage.
- **URL:** <https://religionnews.com/2024/01/16/jehovahs-witnesses-go-to-trial-against-norway-after-state-registration-is-revoked/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Established journalism by Religion News Service, a nonprofit news organization covering religion globally.

**Claim: The Oslo District Court ruled against Watchtower on March 4, 2024. The Borgarting Court of Appeal reversed the District Court's decision on March 14, 2025, ruling unanimously in Watchtower's favor. The State of Norway appealed the Court of Appeal decision to the Supreme Court.**

- **Source:** Oslo District Court judgment, March 4, 2024; Borgarting Court of Appeal judgment, March 14, 2025; Human Rights Without Frontiers documentation.
- **URL:** <https://hrwf.eu/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Public Norwegian court records.

**Claim: At the February 2026 Supreme Court hearings, Anders Ryssdal acknowledged that Watchtower had "spoken too much about the term translated as avoid" in its publications.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org live coverage of the Norwegian Supreme Court, Day 2, February 6, 2026.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/norway-supreme-court-day-2-the-price-we-pay-jehovahs-witness/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Live coverage of a public Supreme Court proceeding.

**Claim: During the earlier Oslo District Court trial in 2024 and the Borgarting Court of Appeal in 2025, prosecutors played the 2017 Jehovah's Witness video "Loyally Uphold Jehovah's Judgments — Shun Unrepentant Wrongdoers," which dramatized a young woman named Sonja being disfellowshipped and shunned by her family.**

- **Source:** Preach From The Housetops transcripts of the February 2026 Supreme Court hearings, quoting Watchtower attorney Gabrielsen confirming the video's presentation at the lower court proceedings; JW.org Meeting Workbook, September 2017.
- **URL:** <https://preachfromthehousetops.com/2026/02/09/norway-vs-watchtower-supreme-court-appeal/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Quotation from Watchtower's own attorney on the record.
- **Note:** The video's character name is rendered as "Sonja" in Watchtower's own Meeting Workbook study questions for September 2017.

**Claim: The 2017 shunning video "Loyally Uphold Jehovah's Judgments — Shun Unrepentant Wrongdoers" was quietly removed from JW.org in 2024, during ongoing lower court proceedings, with no official announcement or explanation.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org documentation of the video's removal from JW.org.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/jehovahs-witnesses-remove-shunning-video/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — AvoidJW documented and archived the removal.

**Claim: A Jehovah's Witness representative testified at the Norwegian Supreme Court that the 2017 shunning video was "never meant as any kind of instruction, advice, or any**

**learning for the common JW from Watchtower. It was just a random example showing how some families would choose to handle things."**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org live coverage of the Norwegian Supreme Court, February 2026.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/norway-supreme-court-day-2-the-price-we-pay-jehovahs-witness/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Live coverage of a public Supreme Court proceeding.

**Claim: On a November 2025 podcast interview, Ryssdal predicted that the Norwegian Supreme Court ruling would come in mid-March 2026.**

- **Source:** CNE News interview with Anders Ryssdal, November 17, 2025.
- **URL:** <https://cne.news/article/4912-when-secularism-turns-controlling-in-norway-jehovahs-faith-on-trial-in-cnes-podcast>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Ryssdal's on-record statement on a recorded podcast interview.

**Claim: In March 2024, eleven days after the Oslo District Court ruled against Watchtower, the Governing Body issued Letter S-395 to elders worldwide, softening how disfellowshipped people could be greeted at meetings.**

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org archive of Letter S-395; Watchtower Governing Body Update #2, March 15, 2024.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/shocking-changes-2024-gb-update-2/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own body of elders correspondence.
- **Note:** The Oslo District Court ruling was dated March 4, 2024. Letter S-395 was dated March 15, 2024 — an 11-day gap.

**Claim: In August 2024, the Watchtower study edition announced that the word "disfellowshipped" would be replaced going forward with "removed from the congregation."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower study edition, August 2024, "Help for Those Who Are Removed From the Congregation."
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-august-2024/Help-for-Those-Who-Are-Removed-From-the-Congregation/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own study edition.

**Claim: The July 2026 Watchtower study edition contains an article titled "Help Others Come to Know Jehovah." Page 21, paragraph 4 states: "We want our Bible student to dedicate himself — not to us, not to a set of teachings, not to an organization — but to Jehovah."**

- **Source:** The Watchtower study edition, July 2026, "Help Others Come to Know Jehovah."
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-july-2026/Help-Others-Come-to-Know-Jehovah/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own published study edition.

**Claim: Watchtower's current baptism question, used since 2019, reads: "Do you understand that your baptism identifies you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with Jehovah's organization?"**

- **Source:** JWfacts.com documentation of baptism question revisions (1985, 2019).
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/baptism.php>

- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Direct quote from Watchtower's own baptism materials.

## SECTION 11: Sticky Ending — France, and the Path to the European Court of Human Rights

**Claim:** During the February 2026 Supreme Court hearings, Anders Ryssdal stated that "the last word lies with Strasbourg," signaling Watchtower's intent to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights if they lose at the domestic level.

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org live coverage of the Norwegian Supreme Court hearings, February 2026.
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/norway-supreme-court-day-2-the-price-we-pay-jehovahs-witness/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Live coverage of a public Supreme Court proceeding.

**Claim:** In France, the state anti-cult agency MIVILUDES has accused Jehovah's Witnesses of harmful practices. Watchtower has sued MIVILUDES repeatedly and has been winning in the French Administrative Courts — as of July 2025, MIVILUDES had been convicted six times in French court since June 2024 for defamation or procedural violations in its reporting on Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious groups.

- **Source:** Paris Administrative Court rulings, June 14, 2024, and July 11, 2025; Human Rights Without Frontiers coverage.
- **URL:** <https://hrwf.eu/france-the-miviludes-convicted-for-the-5th-time-in-2025-must-again-pay-its-victim/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Public French Administrative Court rulings.

**Claim:** In April 2024, the French government passed a new anti-cult law titled "reinforcing the fight against cultic deviances." The Senate rejected the text twice. The National Assembly passed it 146 to 104. The law creates new criminal offenses, expands MIVILUDES's role in prosecutions, and allows private anti-cult groups to participate in trials as civil parties.

- **Source:** EU Reporter news analysis of the April 2024 French anti-cult law.
- **URL:** <https://www.eureporter.co/world/france-world/2024/04/13/france-passes-new-anti-cult-law-against-senates-opposition/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Publicly enacted French legislation.

**Claim:** The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) publicly warned that France's new anti-cult law could disproportionately target minority religious groups including Jehovah's Witnesses.

- **Source:** USCIRF official statements on the draft French anti-cult law, December 2023 and subsequent.
- **URL:** <https://bitterwinter.org/uscirf-warns-against-new-french-anti-cult-draft-law/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Official statement from a U.S. federal commission.

## SECTION 12: Additional Supporting Sources

## Wikipedia: Jehovah's Witnesses' handling of child sexual abuse

- **Source:** \*Wikipedia\*
- **URL:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s\\_Witnesses%27\\_handling\\_of\\_child\\_sexual\\_abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jehovah%27s_Witnesses%27_handling_of_child_sexual_abuse)
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Thoroughly referenced Wikipedia article citing primary court records, Royal Commission findings, and published news coverage.
- **Contains:** Global overview of documented Jehovah's Witness institutional responses to child sexual abuse, including the 2016 Ireland case, the Australian Royal Commission findings, the Pennsylvania grand jury investigation, and multiple civil lawsuit summaries.

## JWFacts.com

- **Source:** \*JWFacts.com\*
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Long-established research site with extensive primary-source citations to Watchtower publications.
- **Contains:** Detailed tracking of Watchtower doctrinal changes, archived publication quotes, baptism question history, Bulgaria settlement documentation, theocratic warfare quote archive, and elder manual analysis.

## AvoidJW.org

- **Source:** \*AvoidJW.org\*
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Established advocacy and documentation site maintained by researchers closely tracking Watchtower policy in real time.
- **Contains:** Elder manual archives, shunning video tracking, Norwegian Supreme Court live coverage, Sheffer trial reporting, Governing Body Update analysis, and primary-source document reproductions.

## Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF)

- **Source:** \*HRWF — Brussels-based religious freedom research NGO\*
- **URL:** <https://hrwf.eu/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Established religious freedom research organization founded in 1988, with rigorous documentation of international legal proceedings involving minority religions.
- **Contains:** Detailed coverage of the Norwegian deregistration case, the French MIVILUDES litigation, and the Bulgarian ECHR settlement — each with primary court record citations.

## Watchtower Online Library (WOL)

- **Source:** \*Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania\*
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — Watchtower's own official online library, containing their publications, study articles, reference works, and Bible translations.
- **Contains:** Full archive of The Watchtower, Awake!, Insight on the Scriptures, Reasoning From the Scriptures, study editions, and New World Translation Bible text.

## Preach From The Housetops

- **Source:** \*Preach From The Housetops\*
- **URL:** <https://preachfromthehousetops.com/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — Research site publishing extensive transcripts of JW court proceedings.
- **Contains:** Full transcripts and live translations of the Norwegian Supreme Court hearings, District Court proceedings, and Court of Appeal hearings on the Jehovah's Witnesses deregistration case.

*This reference document is published alongside the video at [exjwanalyzer.com](http://exjwanalyzer.com). The paper trail is there for anyone who wants to see it.*