



**European
Bureau for
Conscientious
Objection**



Joint Press Release: International organisations call for actions at the Ukrainian and Russian embassies to protest against the forced mobilisation and to support conscientious objectors and deserters

22 February 2023

In the framework of the #ObjectWarCampaign ([Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service](#)), the **International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)**, **War Resisters' International (WRI)**, the **European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO)**, and **Connection e.V. (Germany)**, call for **actions at the Ukrainian and Russian embassies from the 23rd to the 27th of February 2023** to protest against the forced mobilisation and to express solidarity with Ukrainian and Russian conscientious objectors and deserters.

The four organisations denounce all the cases of forced and even violent recruitment to the armies of both sides, as well as all the cases of persecution of conscientious objectors and deserters.

The organisations highlight the case of 46-year-old Christian conscientious objector **Vitaly Alekseenko** who was **convicted to one-year imprisonment sentence** by the Ivano-Frankivsk Appeal Court on 16 January 2023 for refusing call up to the military on conscientious grounds. **"I told the court I agree that I have broken the law of Ukraine,"** Alekseenko told [Forum 18](#), **"but I am not guilty under the law of God."** Ivano-Frankivsk police told him "to be ready to be taken to prison" on 20 February 2023.

The four organisations consider the conviction of conscientious objector Vitaly Alekseenko a **blatant violation of his right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion**, guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is **non-derogable** in time of public emergency, according to Article 4.2 of ICCPR.

The organisations express their full solidarity with Vitaly Alekseenko and urge the Ukrainian authorities to drop all charges against him immediately. The organisations underline that his conviction occurs in the context that Ukraine has suspended the right of conscientious objection in the current emergency and call for the relevant decree to be immediately reversed.

The organisations also recall their strong condemnation of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, and call on the soldiers not to participate in hostilities and on all recruits to refuse military service. They also demand **Russia to stop prosecuting and release all anti-war protestors** who non-violently oppose their government's war of aggression against Ukraine. The organisations as well as call on the **Belarusian government to restrain from participation in and complicity with this war.**

The Ukrainian, Russian and Belarusian governments should safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, including in wartime, fully complying with the European and international standards, amongst others the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights. Moreover, Ukraine is member of the Council of Europe and needs to continue to respect the European Convention of Human Rights. As now Ukraine becomes candidate to join the European Union, it will need to respect the Human Rights as defined in the EU Treaty, and the jurisprudence of the EU Court of Justice, which include the right of conscientious objection to military service.

Furthermore, the organisations emphasize that **thousands of men and women on all sides are trying to flee their countries to evade the crimes of war.** They are all our hope for overcoming violence. Therefore, **the European Union should grant protection and asylum to all deserters and conscientious objectors!** The Union should **urge the Ukrainian government to stop persecuting conscientious objectors to military service and to guarantee them a full right to conscientious objection!** And the European Union should **open the borders to those who oppose war at great personal risk in their country!**



More info to Vitaly Alekseenko: [UKRAINE: Conscientious objector told "to be ready to be taken to prison" - Forum 18, 15/02/2023](#)

Photo: Vitaly Alekseenko, Copyright: Vitaly Alekseenko

#ObjectWarCampaign: [Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service](#)



**#OBJECT WAR
CAMPAIGN**

Solidarity with conscientious objectors and deserters from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine **Sign now!**

**#ОткажиВойне
#ВідмовВійні**

Contact persons:

- Alexia Tsouni, European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO), ebco@ebco-beoc.org, www.ebco-beoc.org (English, Greek)
- Semih Sapmaz, War Resisters' International (WRI), semih@wri-irg.org, www.wri-irg.org (English, Turkish)
- Zaira Zafarana, International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), zaira.zafarana@ifor.org, www.ifor.org (English, Italian)
- Rudi Friedrich, Connection e.V., office@Connection-eV.org, www.Connection-eV.org (English, German)

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](#) was founded in Brussels in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors in the European countries to promote the right to conscientious objection to preparations for, and participation in, war and any other type of military activity as a fundamental human right. EBCO enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. EBCO is entitled to lodge collective complaints concerning the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe since 2021. EBCO provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. EBCO is involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament on the application by the Member States of its resolutions on conscientious objection and civilian service, as determined in the "Bandrés Molet & Bindi Resolution" of 1994. EBCO is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.

[War Resisters' International \(WRI\)](#) was founded in London in 1921 as a global network of grassroots organisations, groups and individuals working together for a world without war. WRI remains committed to its founding declaration that 'War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war, and to strive for the removal of all causes of war'. Today WRI is a global pacifist and antimilitarist network with over 90 affiliated groups in 40 countries. WRI facilitates mutual support, by linking people together through publications, events and actions, initiating nonviolent campaigns that actively involve local groups and individuals, supporting those who oppose war and who challenge its causes, and promoting and educating people about pacifism and nonviolence. WRI runs three programmes of work that are important to the network: The Right to Refuse to Kill Programme, the Nonviolence Programme, and Countering the Militarisation of Youth.

The [International Fellowship of Reconciliation \(IFOR\)](#) was founded in 1914 in response to the horrors of war in Europe, and has taken a consistent stance against war and its preparation throughout its history. Today IFOR has branches, groups, and affiliates in over 40 countries on all continents, while the International Secretariat is located in the Netherlands. IFOR's membership includes adherents of all the major spiritual traditions as well as those who have other spiritual sources for their commitment to nonviolence. IFOR has observer and consultative status to the United Nations ECOSOC and UNESCO organisations. IFOR maintains permanent representatives in Geneva, New York and Vienna and at the UNESCO in Paris who regularly participate in conferences and meetings of UN bodies, providing testimony and expertise from different regional perspectives, promoting non-violent alternatives in the fields of human rights, development, and disarmament.

[Connection e.V.](#) was founded in 1993 as an association advocating a comprehensive right to conscientious objection at an international level. The organisation is based in Offenbach, Germany, and collaborates with groups opposing war, conscription and the military in Europe and beyond, extending to Turkey, Israel, the U.S., Latin America and Africa. Connection e.V. demands that conscientious objectors from war regions should get asylum, and offers counseling and information to refugees and support for their self-organisation.