



**European
Bureau for
Conscientious
Objection**



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Peace Activist Olga Karach Was Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison Due to Her Human Rights Activities

Belarus must stop prosecuting peace activists and conscientious objectors!

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The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection](#), [War Resisters' International](#) (WRI), the [International Fellowship of Reconciliation](#) (IFOR), and [Connection e.V.](#) condemn the 12-year prison sentence and a fine of 170,000 Euros imposed on EBCO board member Olga Karach in her recent trial in Belarus.

On July 8, 2024, Brest Regional Court announced the verdict in the case of human rights defender Olga Karach, head of the International Center for civil initiatives "Our House" (Nash Dom). Olga Karach is accused of "conspiracy to seize power by unconstitutional means" (part 1 of Article 357 of the Belarusian Criminal Code); "promotion of extremist activity" (part 1 and part 2 of Article 361-4 of the Belarusian Criminal Code); "discrediting the Republic of Belarus" (Article 369-1 of the Criminal Code). **Together with her, Veranika Tsepkala, Yauhen Vilski, Anatoli Kotau and Vadzim Dzmitrenak received 12 years in prison each and fines.**

The decision announced on July 8 in the Brest Regional Court creates an extremely worrying situation for the security of Olga Karach and her organization International Center for Civil Initiatives "Our House" (Nash Dom), which supports war resisters and conscientious objectors in Belarus as part of the [#ObjectWarCampaign network](#). This decision of the court reinforces the threat to the security of peace activists and human rights defenders in Belarus. This concerning situation has also been highlighted last week by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, during her report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Karach, through her organization 'Our House', carries out numerous activities defending human rights and advocating the right to conscientious objection to military service in Belarus. She is also supporting Belarusian citizens who have fled to other countries to avoid military service in Belarus and possible military activities in support of the illegal Russian aggression to Ukraine. Because of these activities she has been subject to multiple prosecutions and even the risk of deportation from Lithuania where she is currently seeking protection. **Apart from the decision announced on July 8, she is also waiting for the decisions in other two cases in which she is tried. Karach stated that she expects death penalty or 25 years in prison in one of these cases. This clearly shows the risks that Belarusian human rights defenders are exposed to.**

Olga Karach is being threatened, tried and punished for her peace work and it is simply unacceptable! The European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO), War Resisters' International (WRI), the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), and Connection e.V. stand in solidarity with the human rights defender Olga Karach and will continue to follow her case closely.

MORE INFORMATION:

Press release of "Our House" Nash Dom, WHRD Olga Karach sentenced to 12 years in prison in absentia in Belarus : <https://news.house/62484>

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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 Türkiye, 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.
