



European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

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E B C O P R E S S R E L E A S E

Ukraine: EBCO visits imprisoned Christian conscientious objector Vitaly Alkeseenko and calls for his immediate and unconditional release

Kiev, 17 April 2023

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](http://www.ebco-beoc.org) visited conscientious objector **Vitaly Alkeseenko** in the state institution "Kolomyiska Correctional Colony (No. 41)" in the Ivano-Frankivsk region of Ukraine on April 14th, and **strongly denounced his imprisonment once again.**

Vitaly Alkeseenko, 46-year-old Protestant Christian, is imprisoned since 23 February 2023, following his conviction to **one-year imprisonment sentence for refusing call up to the military on religious conscientious grounds.** On 18 February 2023 a cassation complaint was submitted to the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court refused to suspend his sentence on time of proceedings and scheduled hearings on 25 May 2023. **EBCO calls for international observers and international media coverage of Vitaly Alkeseenko's trial in Kiev on May 25th.**

So Vitaly Alkeseenko remains imprisoned in 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.

"It's outrageous and against European values and human rights standards to see Vitaly Alkeseenko behind bars; he is clearly a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally, with all charges against him dropped", EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated after meeting him and delivering to him postcards with messages of solidarity from a series of individuals and organisations in different countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey and Ukraine), as well as photos of interventions in support of his case (e.g. [public hearing in the European Parliament](#) and [protest actions at the Ukrainian embassies](#)).

At the same time, a coalition of organisations including the [Ukrainian Pacifist Movement](#) (UPM), the [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection](#) (EBCO) and [Connection e.V.](#), are working on reporting the case of **Vitaly Alkeseenko** to the [United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) as well as to the [United Nations Human Rights Committee](#).

EBCO reminds the Ukrainian government that they 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. 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.

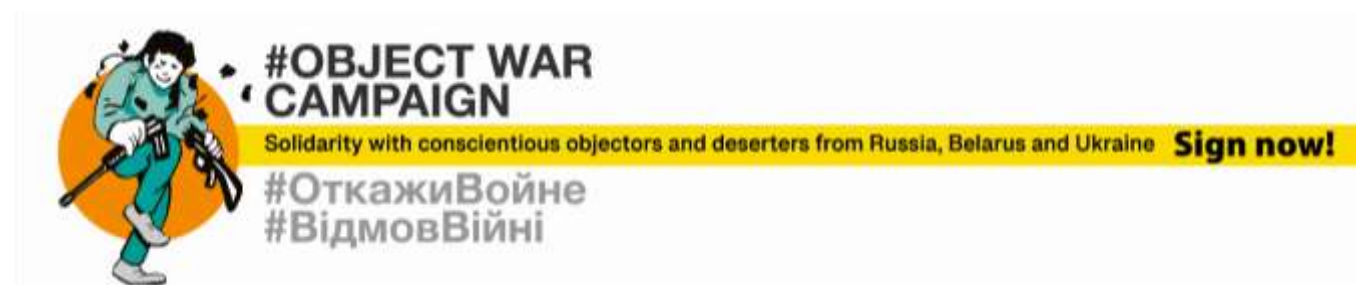
"I told the court I agree that I have broken the law of Ukraine," Alkeseenko told [Forum 18](#) from Ivano-Frankivsk after the appeal hearing, **"but I am not guilty under the law of God. I want to be honest to myself."**

EBCO underlines 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 policy to be immediately reversed. EBCO strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and calls on all soldiers not to participate in hostilities and on all recruits to refuse military service. EBCO **denounces 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, deserters and non-violent anti-war protestors.**

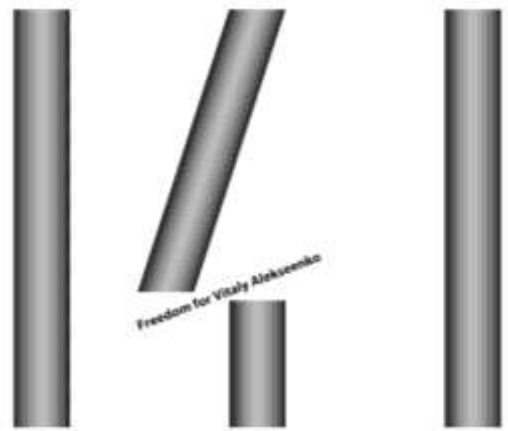


More info: [EBCO PRESS RELEASE: One year later: Stop the war NOW, give peace a chance! Premiere of the "Make Art, Not War!" film](#)

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



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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.