

Human Rights Council, 52nd Session

31st March 2023

Item 10: Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Ukraine

Oral statement delivered by International Fellowship Of Recnciliation

Mr. President, Mr. High Commissioner,

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) thanks [the Office of the High Commissioner] for the oral update.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine who are suffering for the ongoing war of aggression by the Russian Federation, which is causing tragedies and violations and an inhumane nuclear threat.

War should be abolished.

We stand in solidarity with those who courageously refuse to kill and call on the international community to ensure full legal guarantees of their human right to conscientious objection and to provide them protection and asylumⁱ.

The right to conscientious objection to military service should be protected and cannot be restricted as highlighted in the last OHCHR quadrennial thematic reportⁱⁱ.

The right to conscientious objection in Ukraineⁱⁱⁱ is currently suspended^{iv}.

We call on Ukraine to release the prisoner of conscience^v Vitaly Alexeenko, jailed^{vi} on February 23rd 2023.^{vii}

We appeal for the acquittal of conscientious objector Hennadii Tomniuk.^{viii}

We are greatly concerned for the case of Andrii Vyshnevetsky, a conscientious objector held in the army, at frontline who should be discharged on the grounds of conscience.^{ix}

It has been also reported that Kyiv regional military administration has decided to terminate alternative service of tens of conscientious objectors and had ordered conscientious objectors to appear in military recruitment centre.

We are also concerned about the forced detention of Russian refusers to war in the occupied territories, as highlighted in our recent joint press release.^x

We call on this Council to guarantee the protection of all human rights, including the right to conscientious objection which is inherent in the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion.

Thank you.

ⁱ Broad civil society alliance calls for protection/asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, <https://www.ifor.org/news/2022/6/10/broad-civil-society-alliance-calls-for-protection-asylum-for-deserters-and-conscientious-objectors-from-russia-belarus-and-ukraine>

Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service <https://you.wemove.eu/campaigns/russia-belarus-ukraine-protection-and-asylum-for-deserters-and-conscientious-objectors-to-military-service>

ⁱⁱ Analytical report by the OHCHR (see paragraph 5), <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/50/43>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Law of Ukraine “On mobilization and preparation for mobilization” and presidential decree “On general mobilization” does not mention any exemptions for conscientious objectors to military service.

^{iv} <https://en.connection-ev.org/article-3614>

^v Ukraine: Vitaly Alkeseenko is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally, <https://ebco-beoc.org/node/553>

^{vi} UKRAINE: Conscientious objector now jailed, https://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2813

^{vii} On 15 September 2022, Alekseenko was sentenced to 1 year imprisonment. On 16 January, Ivano-Frankivsk Appeal Court rejected Alekseenko’s appeal against his one-year prison term.

^{viii} See footnote v. Tomniuk was sentenced to suspended 3-year jail term but prosecution asked appellate court for imprisonment instead of suspended term, and Tomniuk also lodged appellation complaint asking for acquittal.

^{ix} See footnote v.

^x <https://www.ifor.org/news/2023/3/29/russia-release-all-those-who-object-to-engage-in-the-war-and-are-illegally-detained-in-the-russian-controlled-areas-of-ukraine>