



**European
Bureau for
Conscientious
Objection**



J O I N T P R E S S R E L E A S E

Ukraine: Pacifism is not a crime in democratic states!

Drop the charge against Yurii Sheliazhenko, #FreePeaceSpeech

4 August 2023

The **European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO)**, **War Resisters' International (WRI)**, the **International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)** and **Connection e.V.** (Germany) strongly condemn the fact that **Yurii Sheliazhenko**, Executive Secretary of the [Ukrainian Pacifist Movement](#), has been formally charged by the Ukrainian government with the crime of "**justification of Russian aggression**" with sole "evidence" the Statement of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, adopted at the meeting on International Day of Peace 21 September 2022, entitled "**Peace Agenda for Ukraine and the World**". What is more, the statement **explicitly condemns Russian aggression** (<https://worldbeyondwar.org/peace-agenda-for-ukraine-and-the-world/>).

We are all shocked that the **Security Service of Ukraine** broke into the apartment of Yurii Sheliazhenko yesterday, August 3rd 2023, and conducted an **illegal search and seizure operation**, finding nothing criminal and taking his phone, his computer, as well as some documents of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement. We strongly protest about the **harassment** of Yurii Sheliazhenko, who is summoned to **interrogation** on August 7th, 8th and 9th 2023.

We remind the Ukrainian government that pacifism is not a crime in democratic states. We demand that the charge against Yurii Sheliazhenko is immediately dropped, and that human rights are fully protected, including the **right to freedom of expression** and the **right to conscientious objection to military service**, which is inherent in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, guaranteed, amongst others, under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is non-derogable even in a time of public emergency, as stated in Article 4(2) of ICCPR.

Yurii Sheliazhenko is a well-known conscientious objector, pacifist, human rights defender and lawyer. We strongly condemn all actions of **harassment** and all attempts of **intimidation** against him and the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, as well as all **cases of forced recruitment and even abduction of conscripts to the involved armies, and all persecutions of conscientious objectors, deserters and non-violent anti-war protestors.**

We support [EBCO's request for an urgent meeting with the President of Ukraine in Kyiv](#) on Monday August 7th 2023 to discuss our concerns and recommendations, also in the framework of our joint **#ObjectWarCampaign: [Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service](#).**



We also support the petition to the Ukrainian Government which was launched by the World BEYOND War yesterday:

[Tell the Ukrainian Government to Drop Prosecution of Peace Activist Yuri Sheliashenko](#)

And finally **we share the press release published by the International Peace Bureau today:**

[Justice for Yuri Sheliashenko](#)

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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 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.
