



UN Human Rights Council, 59th Session
Geneva, July 3rd 2025

Item 10: Interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's oral update on the situation of human rights in Ukraine and the interim report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Crimea

Oral statement delivered by War Resisters International, in collaboration with Connection e.V.

Madam Vice-president,

War Resisters International (WRI), together with its partner Connection e.V., expresses its solidarity with the people of Ukraine suffering from the military aggression of the Russian Federation and call for an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiation.

We raise concerns about the Russian Federation forcibly imposing military registration and conscriptionⁱ in occupied territories, pressuring civilians to sign contracts for military serviceⁱⁱ and indoctrinating children militaristicallyⁱⁱⁱ. In Crimea, 14 Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned,^{iv} and illegal mobilisation produced 574 criminal cases^v.

Russian soldiers mobilized [in February 2022] into [the armies of] the self-proclaimed republics in eastern Ukraine [and, in September 2022, incorporated into the Russian armed forces] are unable to refuse military service. In the event of desertion, they face criminal prosecution in Russia and suspicion of treason from the Ukrainian side. As a result, they have virtually no opportunity to apply for asylum in a safe country and their relocation is nearly impossible.^{vi}

In Ukraine there are still no effective procedures for conscientious objection claims and exemption from military duty. 15 prisoners of conscience detained in prisons and military units, as reported by the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) should be released^{vii}, and objectors accused of draft evasion acquitted.

The lack of recognition of the human right to conscientious objection has also been reported in the OHCHR periodic report^{viii} as well as 9 cases of torture and ill-treatment of conscientious objectors^{ix} [arbitrarily detained by military recruiters] and pressure by military recruiters on members of the legal profession^x.

We urge the full implementation of the human right to refuse military service [inherent in art 18 of ICCPR].^{xi} We hope the Constitutional Court of Ukraine will promptly satisfy complaints of conscientious objectors Dmytro Zelinsky and Vitalii Alexeienko and [eventually] acquit^{xii} Vitalii Kryushenko^{xiii}.

Thank you.

ⁱ The occupation authorities criminalize evasion of such service under Article 328 of the Criminal Code of the Russian

Federation (Evasion of service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation). In January-March 2025, at least 23 cases under this article were considered in the courts of Crimea. Among them: 18 guilty verdicts in the “courts” of first instance, 1 decision of the appellate instance to uphold the verdict, 4 cases are under consideration in the “courts”. Over the entire period of occupation, the CHRG has documented at least 577 such criminal case.

https://crimeahrg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2_en-2.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://www.dw.com/en/how-russia-recruits-troops-in-occupied-ukrainian-territories/a-72289013> ; <https://suspilne.media/926767-in-enemy-army-russia-conscripts-ukrainian-youth/> ; <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/zaiava-mzs-shchodo-nezakonnoho-pryzovu-hromadian-ukrainy-do-zbroinykh-syl-rosiiskoi-federatsii-na-tymchasovo-okupovanykh-terytoriiakh-ukrainy>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://rubryka.com/en/2025/05/14/uzhe-zaluchyly-ponad-6-tysyach-ditej-v-okupovani-juganskij-oblasti-poslyuyut-vzayemodiyu-iz-yunarmiyeyu/> ; <https://english.nv.ua/nation/russia-building-youth-military-training-camp-in-occupied-mariupol-50500560.html>

^{iv} <https://www.jw.org/en/news/region/global/jehovahs-witnesses-in-prison-crimea/>; https://cfp2.jw-cdn.org/a/9acc529/20/o/1014751_E_cnt_1.pdf

^v Crimean Human Rights Group’s report <https://zmina.info/en/news-en/illegal-mobilization-sparks-574-criminal-cases-in-occupied-crimea-crimean-human-rights-groups-report/>

23 cases under art. 328 of the Russian Criminal Code in 2025 until now in Crimea.

^{vi} <https://news.liga.net/politics/news/odnorazovye-bolshinstvo-dezertirov-i-soch-v-armii-rossii-mobilizovannye-na-don-basse>

^{vii} <https://ebco-beoc.org/ukraine/2024> ; <https://freedomofbelief.net/articles/russia-and-ukraine-are-called-to-release-prisoners-of-conscience>

^{viii} <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/42nd-periodic-report-human-rights-situation-ukraine-1-december-2024-31>

^{ix} Ibid., para. 86.

^x <https://en.unba.org.ua/activity/news/10457-another-conflict-with-the-tcc-an-advocate-s-leg-was-broken-and-his-client-jumped-out-of-a-window.html> ; <https://en.unba.org.ua/activity/news/10357-mobilization-of-advocates-in-court-unba-records-another-case-of-pressure.html> ; <https://en.unba.org.ua/activity/news/10321-bcu-demands-verification-of-authenticity-of-ssu-letter-on-dangerous-advocacy.html>

^{xi} See note iv, para. 106(r).

^{xii} According to the OHCHR report (note iv, para. 85), in April 2025, the Supreme Court of Ukraine upheld the decision to sentence a conscientious objector from the Jehovah’s Witnesses community to three years of imprisonment for evading military service, arguing that the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights on conscientious objection was not relevant for such a large-scale war as waged against Ukraine. This decision runs counter to international human rights law, which does not provide for such qualifications; indeed, under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the right of conscientious objection to military service allows no restrictions or derogation. This judgment of the Supreme Court concerns a prisoner of conscience Serhii Ivanushchenko.

^{xiii} <https://www.civilni.media/400/> ; <https://reyestr.court.gov.ua/Review/128347458>