



UN Human Rights Council, 57th Session
Geneva, September 20th 2024

**GD Item 3: Promotion and protection of all human rights,
civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights**

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

Mr Vice-President,

War Resisters International (WRI), together with its partner Connection e.V., welcomes the report of the OHCHR on conscientious objection to military service [which has been presented to this Council during the last session]¹. Member states received recommendations on legal and policy frameworks to uphold human rights in the context of conscientious objection [in accordance with States' obligations under international human rights law and applicable international human rights standards].

There are still some countries, as Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Singapore, Thailand, Türkiye for instance, which do not recognize this human right and some others where there is a punitive alternative service.

In different countries there are illegal conscription practices such as ongoing roundups in Russia.

Some countries present special provisions at time of armed conflict which differ from the regular ones and do not comply with international standards.

In Ukraine, for instance, we register a *de facto* suspension of this human right and in Israel, since October 7th 2023, conscientious objectors, who are repeatedly imprisoned, [are no longer exempted by the Suitability Committee and] are possibly granted an exemption only on mental health grounds, as showed by the case of Tal Mitnick.

The right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion [and is a non-derogable right and it continues to apply regardless of a situation of armed conflict].

OHCHR report reiterates that this right applies as well to military personnel and reservists.²

Many conscientious objectors continue to be imprisoned or forced to flee their country and seek protection abroad, which is very often denied, in open contrast to the UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection³, and thus they can be sent back where they may be imprisoned or conscripted.

WRI, together with Connection e.V., calls upon this Council to fully protect art. 18 (the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and actively collaborate to ensure the full implementation of the human right to conscientious objection to military service in all countries [in compliance with international standards].

Thank you.

¹ <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/56/30>

² Ibidem para. 27.

See also A/HRC/41/23, para. 60 (b) and (f).

³UNHCR, Guidelines on International Protection No.10: Claims to refugee status related to military service within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/529efd2e9.pdf>