

24 July 2023

To the attention of:

- Charles Michel, President of the European Council
- Ursula Von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
- Josep Borrell, Vice President of the European Commission/High Representative

Open letter calling for action for the protection of and granting of asylum by EU Members States to Russian conscientious objectors

Dear President Michel,
Dear President Von der Leyen,
Dear High Representative Borrell,

Since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights has monitored the situation of Russian conscientious objectors refusing to fight and get involved in this war. At numerous occasions, in particular during a parliamentary hearing on 2 March 2023, devoted to conscientious objection, we have expressed our solidarity and praised the resistance to war to the Russians who refuse to take up arms and want to exert the human right to conscientious objection to military service. Furthermore, we think that given the fact that Russian armed forces have practised violations of human rights and breached international humanitarian law in Ukraine, there is a moral justification for Russians not to serve in the forces involved in the war.

Although since 1993, the right to conscientious objection has been enshrined in the constitution of the Russian Federation, military authorities do not inform conscripts about this right or deny them the exercise of it. In the context of warfare, the Russian State Duma passed on 11 April 2023 a new bill aimed at strengthening the conscription law. Furthermore, Russian military command has reportedly established at least 13 illegal detention centres in the occupied Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine, where more than 600 Russian people are in detention due to their refusal to participate in warfare.

Against this backdrop, we would like to draw your attention to the situation of Russian conscientious objectors and deserters seeking international protection. We believe that the afore-mentioned development and possibly new full or partial mobilisations in Russia could lead to an increase of the number of applications from Russians for asylum and refugee status in EU Member States. Relying on the paragraph 30 of Parliament's resolution of 16 February 2023 on one year of Russia's invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine, we also think that it is the duty of the European Union and the Member States to protect and grant asylum to Russian conscientious objectors.

On this basis, we appeal the Commission and the EU Member States, to carry out further consultations on the common visa policy vis-a-vis Russians, with a view to adapting the guidelines for issuing entry visas to Russians and to reviewing asylum procedures applying to Russians fleeing their country, due to their refusal to serve in Russian armed forces.

We would be very grateful if you would keep us informed on the actions you intend to take in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Udo Bullmann, S&D
MEP Charles Goerens, Renew
MEP Bernard Guetta, Renew
MEP Dietmar Köster, S&D
MEP Hannah Neumann, Greens/EFA
MEP Isabel Santos, S&D
MEP Miguel Urbán Crespo, GUE/NGL
MEP Brando Benifei, S&D
MEP Milan Brglez, S&D
MEP Matthias Ecke, S&D
MEP Cornelia Ernst, GUE/NGL
MEP José Gusmão, GUE/NGL
MEP Erik Marquardt, Greens/EFA
MEP Marisa Matias, GUE/NGL
MEP Matjaž Nemeč, S&D
MEP Nikos Papandreou, S&D
MEP Mounir Satouri, Greens/EFA