



E B C O P R E S S R E L E A S E

Ukraine: EBCO meets with the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement and calls for the immediate and unconditional end of the persecution of all conscientious objectors

Kiev, 19 April 2023

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](http://www.ebco-beoc.org) met with its member organisation in Ukraine, the [Ukrainian Pacifist Movement](http://www.ukrainianpacifistmovement.org) (Український Рух Паціфістів), in Kiev on 15 and 16 April 2023. EBCO also met with conscientious objectors and members of their families in a series of Ukrainian cities between 13 and 17 April, in addition to visiting imprisoned conscientious objector Vitaly Alekseenko on 14 April (<https://ebco-beoc.org/node/560>).

EBCO strongly denounces the fact that Ukraine has suspended the human right to conscientious objection (<https://en.connection-ev.org/article-3614>) and calls for the relevant policy to be immediately reversed. EBCO is gravely concerned about reports 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 (www.ifor.org/news/2023/3/31/ifor-stands-up-at-the-un-for-conscientious-objectors-in-ukraine-and-refers-the-cases-of-vitalii-alexeenko-hennadii-tomniuk-and-andrii-vyshnevetsky).

"We are deeply disappointed to see conscientious objectors being forcibly conscripted, persecuted and even imprisoned in Ukraine. This is a blatant violation of the human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (in which the right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent), guaranteed 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", EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated today. The right to conscientious objection to military service should be protected and cannot be restricted, as also highlighted in the last quadrennial thematic report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (paragraph 5, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/50/43>).

EBCO calls Ukraine to immediately and unconditionally release conscientious objector Vitaly Alekseenko, a prisoner of conscience, and urges for international observers and international media coverage of his trial in Kiev on May 25th. Alekseenko, 46-year-old Protestant Christian, is imprisoned since 23 February 2023, following his conviction to one-year imprisonment sentence for refusing call-up to the military on religious conscientious grounds. On 18 February 2023 a cassation complaint was submitted to the Supreme Court, but the Supreme Court refused to suspend his sentence on time of proceedings and scheduled hearings on 25 May 2023.

EBCO calls for the immediate honourable discharge of Andrii Vyshnevetsky on the grounds of conscience. 34-year old Vyshnevetsky is a conscientious objector who is held in the army, at frontline, although he has repeatedly declared his conscientious objection on religious grounds, as a Christian pacifist. He recently submitted a lawsuit asking the Supreme Court to order President Zelensky to establish the procedure of discharge from military service on the grounds of conscience.

EBCO calls for the acquittal of conscientious objector Mykhailo Yavorsky. 40-year-old Yavorsky was sentenced to one-year imprisonment on 6 April 2023 by the Ivano-Frankivsk city court for refusing mobilisation call-up to the Ivano-Frankivsk military recruitment station on 25 July 2022 on religious conscientious grounds. He stated that he cannot pick up a weapon, wear a military uniform and kill people given his faith and relationship with God. The judgment becomes legally

binding after the expiry of the period for filing an appeal, if no such appeal has been filed. The verdict can be appealed by submitting an appeal to the Ivano-Frankivsk Court of Appeal within 30 days of its announcement. Yavorsky is now preparing to file an appeal.

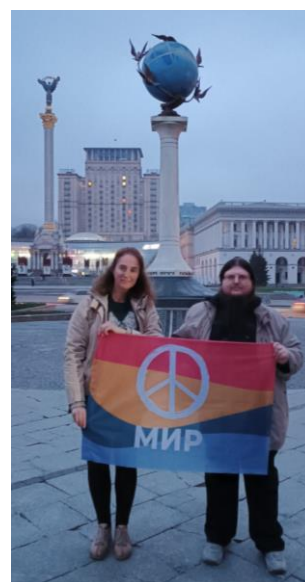
EBCO calls for the acquittal of conscientious objector Hennadii Tomniuk. 39-year old Tomniuk was sentenced to three-year imprisonment suspended for three years in February 2023, but prosecution asked appellate court for imprisonment instead of suspended term, and Tomniuk also lodged appellation complaint asking for acquittal. The hearings in the case of Tomniuk in Ivano-Frankivsk Appellate Court are scheduled for 27 April 2023.

EBCO reminds the Ukrainian government that they should safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, including in wartime, fully complying with the European and international standards, amongst others the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights. Ukraine is member of the Council of Europe and needs to continue to respect the European Convention on Human Rights. As now Ukraine becomes candidate to join the European Union, it will need to respect the Human Rights as defined in the EU Treaty, and the jurisprudence of the EU Court of Justice, which include the right to conscientious objection to military service.

EBCO strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and calls on all soldiers not to participate in hostilities and on all recruits to refuse military service. EBCO denounces all the cases of forced and even violent recruitment to the armies of both sides, as well as all the cases of persecution of conscientious objectors, deserters and non-violent anti-war protestors.

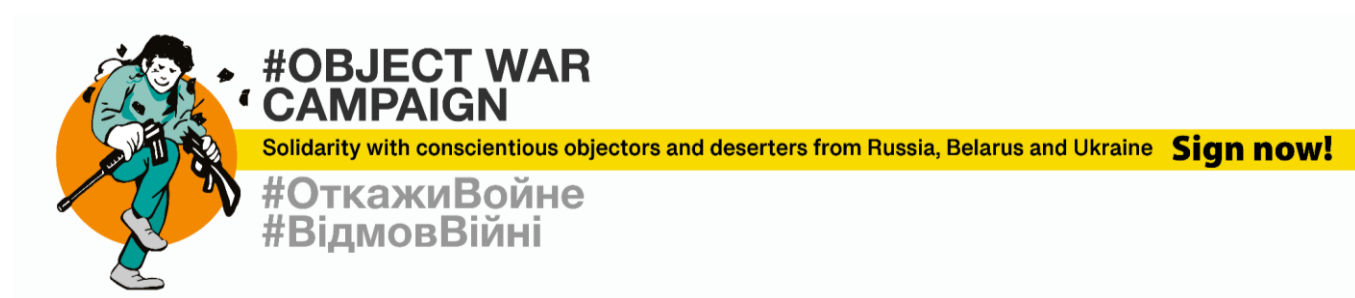
EBCO calls Russia to immediately and unconditionally release all those soldiers and mobilised civilians who object to engage in the war and are illegally detained in a number of centres in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine. Russian authorities are reportedly using threats, psychological abuse and torture to force those detained to return to the front (<https://ebco-beoc.org/node/559>).





More info: [EBCO PRESS RELEASE: One year later: Stop the war NOW, give peace a chance! Premiere of the "Make Art, Not War!" film](#)

[#ObjectWarCampaign: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service](#)



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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.
