

Quaker Peace and Social Witness  
And XX supporting organisations  
Friends House  
173 Euston Road,  
London  
NW1 2B

His Excellency Mr Andrei Kelin  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Russian Federation (Main Building)  
6/7 Kensington Palace Gardens,  
London W8 4QP

7th December 2023

### **The Right of Conscientious Objection in Times of War**

Dear Ambassador Kelin,

We are writing to you as a group of peace, faith-based and human rights organisations based in the UK. We wish to express our grave concern regarding the situation of conscientious objectors from Russia and human rights defenders working on their behalf.

The right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This is reflected in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Russia is party to both of these frameworks and has a duty to uphold them. This universal right is non-derogable even in a time of public emergency, as stated in Article 4(2) of the ICCPR.

Following continued reports of difficulties in claiming the right to conscientious objection, we call on Russia to safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, particularly during this current time of armed conflict, and to do so fully complying with international standards.

We strongly condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We urge Russia to immediately and unconditionally release all soldiers and mobilised civilians who have objected to engaging in the war and are illegally detained and reportedly face ill-treatment. It is also vital that human rights organisations and human rights defenders working on their behalf are not persecuted.

We have written in similar terms to the Ukrainian embassy.

Yours sincerely,

Quakers in Britain  
War Resisters International  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Anglican Pacifist Fellowship  
Churches Together in England  
Peace Pledge Union  
The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Lord Bishop of  
Leeds, Church of England  
Pax Christi England and Wales  
General Assembly of Unitarian and Free  
Christian Churches  
Women's International League for Peace and

Freedom UK  
Cymdeithas y Cymod  
Un Ponte Per  
ForcesWatch  
Northern Friends Peace Board  
Community of Christ (British Isles)  
Ekklesia  
Church and Peace - Ecumenical peace church  
network in Europe  
Abingdon Peace Group  
Movement for the Abolition of War

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Mr Eduard Fesko  
Deputy Head of Mission  
Embassy of Ukraine  
60 Holland Park  
London W11 3SJ

7th December 2023

### **The Right of Conscientious Objection in Times of War**

Dear Mr Fesko,

We are writing to you as a group of peace, faith-based and human rights organisations based in the UK. We wish to express our grave concern regarding the situation of conscientious objectors from Ukraine and human rights defenders working on their behalf.

The right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This is reflected in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Ukraine is party to both of these frameworks and has a duty to uphold them. This universal right is non-derogable even in a time of public emergency, as stated in Article 4(2) of the ICCPR.

Following continued reports of difficulties in claiming the right to conscientious objection, we call on Ukraine to safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, particularly during this current time of armed conflict, and to do so fully complying with international standards.

We strongly condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We urge Ukraine to immediately and unconditionally release and drop charges against those conscientious objectors who have been detained or prosecuted. It is also vital to ensure that human rights organisations and human rights defenders working on their behalf are not persecuted.

We have written in similar terms to the Russian embassy.

Yours sincerely,

Quakers in Britain  
War Resisters International  
Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Anglican Pacifist Fellowship  
Churches Together in England  
Peace Pledge Union  
The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Lord Bishop of  
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