

## CASE STUDY 9

### Omar

#### A refuser

Omar Sa'ad refuses to enlist in the Israeli army based on his beliefs and conscience. Omar is a member of the Druze, a religious group that lives in Israel and other countries in the region. They are subject to conscription into the Israeli armed forces.

Omar, an 18-year-old violist from the northern village of Maghar, was sentenced to his first term in prison on 5 December 2013 in the Tiberias induction base. Since then, he has been sentenced six more times for a total of 150 days.

“...I declare it again and loudly: I am Omar Sa'ad Zaher Aldeen. I refuse to serve in the Israeli military army and I demand the respect for my faith and not to be obliged to do things that contradict my conscience and principles. I want my freedom.”

#### International law

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in opinion 24/2003 on Israel came to the conclusion that the repeated imprisonment of conscientious objectors in Israel is arbitrary and breaks the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion...”

No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.”

**Article 18, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

## FROM EAPPI REPORTS



#### Conscientious objection to war

A conscientious objector is someone who says “no” to being a soldier because they feel it is wrong to hurt or kill. Sometimes, this means breaking the law to follow their conscience.

#### Conscription

Conscription is forcing people to join the armed forces. Ireland has never used conscription, but the United Kingdom used conscription in 1916–20 and 1939–60. The UK recognised the right to conscientious objection, though it could still be very difficult for the people who refused to fight. Many were imprisoned.

#### Conscription in Israel

Israel has military conscription. The law says when young people reach the age of 18, they must join the armed forces. Men have to do two years and eight months, women two years, plus ongoing reserve duty. This applies to Jewish citizens, as well as Druze and Circassians, but not to all Arabs. Some people are also allowed not to join because of religious or health reasons. An increasing number of young people are excused for mental health reasons.

Israeli law does not recognise the right to conscientious objection.