

Human Rights Council, 52nd Session

27th March 2023

UPR adoption – Finland

Oral statement delivered by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Mr. President,

During the 4th cycle of the UPR, Finland received five recommendations from Costa Rica, Croatia, Luxembourg, Panama and Uruguay to comply with international standards concerning the right to conscientious objection to military service. In particular to ensure an alternative service nor punitive or discriminatory as to its nature and duration¹ fully under civilian authority; to end the imprisonment of conscientious objectors and extend the possibility to alternative service.

Finland merely noted those recommendations and stated that they are already addressing them². Unfortunately, these issues are still affecting conscientious objectors and their rights.

The Human Rights Committee raised concerns about the prosecutions and discrimination against conscientious objectors to military service and lack of awareness with regard to non-military service³. Unfortunately, none of the recommendations regarding this matter have been accepted. The Finnish government stated that “the recommendation to take measures to inform the public of the right to refuse military service and to extend this possibility to alternative military service will be taken into account in connection with the possible call-up reform.”⁴ However, this call-up reform itself does not comply with international standards. The call-up reform is based on recommendations published by a parliamentary committee on the development on conscription and fulfilling national defence obligation. Recommendations given by the committee would further deteriorate equality within the conscription system.

We encourage Finland to fully comply with international standards pertaining to the human right to conscientious objection and urge the government to reconsider the length of the alternative service, to ensure that the civilian service advisory board is fully under the control of civilian authority and free the current total objectors in probation.⁵

Thank you.

¹ A/HRC/52/9, 5th January 2023, para 138.79.

² A/HRC/52/9: Response 92, Recommendations 138.78–138.82.

³ A/HRC/WG.6/41/FIN/2: Recommendation 21.

⁴ A/HRC/52/9/Add.1.

⁵ As per to recent communication of AKL (The Union of Conscientious Objectors of Finland) with the Prison and Probation Service of Finland, currently in March 2023 there are no imprisoned total objectors. However, 29 total objectors are condemned to probation and the probation is either ongoing, discontinued or in planification.