

Human Rights Council, 33rd Session  
27th September 2016  
Agenda Item 10 – ID on HC oral update on Ukraine  
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IFOR would like to draw the attention to the plight of young men everywhere in Ukraine who do not wish to become embroiled on either side of the ongoing armed conflict. Some face pressure to join separatist or anti-separatist militias; many more live under the threat of formal conscription into the Government armed forces, which they can avoid only by fleeing the country.

Conscription into the Armed Forces would be suspended following that Autumn's call-up. It became the 29<sup>th</sup> member state of the Council of Europe to join a fifty-year trend away from obligatory military service. Sadly, following the events of early 2014, it became the first to reintroduce conscription.

Only members of a few certain religious minorities may be recognised as conscientious objectors in Ukraine. Ukrainians whose objection is to fighting against their fellow citizens cannot use these provisions. Indeed, the extent to which human rights come under threat at a time of national emergency is dramatically illustrated by the fate of journalist Ruslan Kotsaba, who had been prominent in the "Euro-maidan" movement. For stating publicly that if called-up to take part in a "fratricidal war" he would refuse to go, he was sentenced to 42 months' imprisonment for treason. Laudably, in July this year he was on appeal found "not guilty", but only after fifteen months' detention in conditions which had a severe effect on his health.

IFOR calls on all States to offer protection, and where appropriate asylum, to those who would be at risk of embroilment in a conflict against their fellow-citizens were they to return to Ukraine and who have a conscientious objection to this.