

**Human Rights Council, 47<sup>th</sup> Session  
Geneva, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Item 10: Interactive dialogue on the oral update of the High Commissioner on Ukraine (HRC res. 41/25)  
and interim report of Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Crimea (GA res. 75/192)**

**Oral statement delivered by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.**

Thank you Madam President.

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) thanks the High Commissioner and Her office for the oral presentation on Ukraine and as well the Secretary General and His office for its report.

We express concern about the militarization in the country, the increase of draftees enlisted planned for the 2021 military draft and the ongoing violations of the right to conscientious objection to military service.

Alternative service, for instance, in Ukraine has a punitive and discriminatory character and it is hardly accessible.

IFOR would like to draw again<sup>1</sup> the attention of the Members of this Council and of the High Commissioner to the case of Ukrainian journalist and pacifist Ruslan Kotsaba who is again under trial<sup>2</sup> because of a video posted in 2015 to express opposition to the military mobilization for armed conflict in eastern Ukraine<sup>3</sup>. He has already spent over 500 days under arrest for his expression of anti-war thoughts and is accused again of treason and obstructing military operations.

On June 25<sup>th</sup> he was victim of an attack with the green chemical "Seljonka" by a neo-Nazi group at the Ivano-Frankivsk railway station and received ophthalmological treatment at the hospital.<sup>4</sup> [Unfortunately, the attack on Ruslan Kotsaba is not the only act of violence against Ukrainian activists in recent times.]

As already highlighted by IFOR<sup>5</sup>, "Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a non-derogable right", alike freedom of expression, "and it continues to apply regardless of a situation of armed conflict."

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Oral statement delivered by IFOR during the 45th Human Rights Council - Interactive Dialogue on the oral presentation of the report on the situation of human rights in Ukraine on December 18<sup>th</sup> 2020.

<sup>2</sup> In Kolomyia City District Court of Ivano-Frankivsk Region.

The High Specialized Court on Civil and Criminal Cases in 2017 quashed the acquittal and ordered a retrial. Then several judges and local courts recused from the case; the court ordered to return formal accusation for further investigation, but the order was quashed by the appellate court; and now, judges Kalyniuk, Berkeshuk, and Veselov will examine 58 witnesses of the supposed political impact of Ruslan's video blog and pass their judgment.

<sup>3</sup> Ruslan Kotsaba was arrested on 7 February 2015 in Ivano-Frankivsk, 130 km south-east of Lviv, after he posted a video describing the conflict as "the Donbas fratricidal civil war". He also expressed opposition to military conscription of Ukrainians to take part in the conflict.

He was then named as Amnesty International's first Ukrainian prisoner of conscience in five years. He has already spent 524 days under arrest and was duly acquitted in 2016.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/04/ukraine-suspicious-deaths-need-credible-investigations/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.coe.int/en/web/media-freedom/detail-alert?p\\_p\\_id=sojdashboard\\_WAR\\_coesojportlet&p\\_p\\_lifecycle=0&p\\_p\\_col\\_id=column-4&p\\_p\\_col\\_count=1&sojdashboard\\_WAR\\_coesojportlet\\_alertId=102265091](https://www.coe.int/en/web/media-freedom/detail-alert?p_p_id=sojdashboard_WAR_coesojportlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_col_id=column-4&p_p_col_count=1&sojdashboard_WAR_coesojportlet_alertId=102265091)

<sup>5</sup> Oral statements delivered by IFOR at the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the Human rights Council, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, during the ID with the High Commissioner on the findings of OHCHR report on the situation of human rights in Ukraine.