

**Human Rights Council, 49<sup>th</sup> Session**

**Geneva, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022**

**Item 6: UPR adoption Greece**

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

Mr President,

IFOR welcomes Greece's acceptance<sup>1</sup> of the recommendation to "Revise its national legislation with a view to recognizing the right to conscientious objection to military service, envisaging an alternative service to military service to which all conscientious objectors have access to and that is not punitive or discriminatory in its nature, cost or duration."<sup>2</sup>

We call on Greece to also implement the decision of the Human Rights Committee in the *Petromelidis v. Greece* case.<sup>3</sup>

IFOR is concerned that the State did not accept<sup>4</sup> the recommendation to "consider amending the legislation in order for conscientious objectors to be able to perform alternative civilian service in their place of residence"<sup>5</sup>. In 2019, Greece had reassured the UN [that "With the new legal framework, they can request service in another authority, including close to their place of residence, after five (5) months..."].<sup>6</sup> However, we have been informed that such applications are rejected on the ground that it is not permitted by the legislation.

Furthermore, there is a critical decrease of the number of accepted applications for conscientious objector status, especially those citing ideological grounds. Since 2020, out of 22 applications on ideological grounds only 6 were approved [and 16 were rejected], which means 27%, the lowest in many years. While the percentage of accepted applications on religious grounds is about 97%. This indicates a "discrimination on the basis of different grounds of objection to service", as highlighted by the Human Rights Committee [in its concluding observations] in 2015.

The pending cases at the Council of State, of rejected applicants Charis Vasileiou and Nikolas Stefanidis are another example of the urgent need for Greece to comply with the international standards.<sup>7</sup>

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Greece, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review, [A/HRC/49/5/Add.1](#), 16 December 2021, para.3.

<sup>2</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Greece, [A/HRC/49/5](#), 6 January 2022, recommendation 130.76 (Panama).

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Committee, Views adopted by the Committee under the Optional Protocol, concerning communication No. 3065/2017, Advance unedited version, [CCPR/C/132/D/3065/2017](#), 6 December 2021.

<sup>4</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Greece, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review, [A/HRC/49/5/Add.1](#), 16 December 2021, paras. 6 and 7(c).

<sup>5</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Greece, [A/HRC/49/5](#), 6 January 2022, recommendation 130.88 (Croatia).

<sup>6</sup> Permanent Mission of Greece to the Office of the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva, Verbal Note, 14 August 2019, Ref. No. 6175.4/AS 1237, attached response of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, para. 1c(5). Available at: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=35128>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ifor.org/news/2022/3/21/joint-call-on-the-greek-authorities-regarding-vasileiou-and-stefanidis-conscientious-objectors-cases>