



E B C O P R E S S R E L E A S E

Ukraine: Vitaly Alkeseenko is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally

Brussels, 27 February 2023

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](http://www.ebco-beoc.org) strongly denounces the imprisonment of 46-year-old Christian conscientious objector Vitaly Alkeseenko on 23 February 2023 in the Ivano-Frankivsk pretrial detention center, following his conviction to **one-year imprisonment sentence for refusing call up to the military on conscientious grounds.**

"The imprisonment of Alekseenko is a **blatant violation of his right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion**, guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, **which is non-derogable in time of public emergency**, according to Article 4.2 of ICCPR. **Vitaly Alkeseenko is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally, with all charges against him dropped**", EBCO's President Alexia Tsouni stated today.

EBCO reminds the Ukrainian government that they should safeguard the right to conscientious objection to military service, including in wartime, fully complying with the European and international standards, amongst others the standards set by the European Court of Human Rights. Ukraine is member of the Council of Europe and needs to continue to respect the European Convention of Human Rights. As now Ukraine becomes candidate to join the European Union, it will need to respect the Human Rights as defined in the EU Treaty, and the jurisprudence of the EU Court of Justice, which include the right of conscientious objection to military service.

"I told the court I agree that I have broken the law of Ukraine," Alekseenko told [Forum 18](#) from Ivano-Frankivsk after the appeal hearing, **"but I am not guilty under the law of God. I want to be honest to myself."** He added that had he repented of his "crime", both the lower and the appeal court would have given him a suspended sentence.

On 18 February 2023 a cassation complaint was submitted to the Supreme Court, but Alekseenko will have to wait behind bars for suspension of sentence for the time of consideration of the complaint. It will or will not happen after opening of the cassation proceedings, it may take a month or longer. Then consideration of cassation could take half a year or longer.

EBCO underlines that his conviction occurs in the context that Ukraine has suspended the right of conscientious objection in the current emergency and call for the relevant policy to be immediately reversed. EBCO strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and calls on all soldiers not to participate in hostilities and on all recruits to refuse military service. EBCO **denounces all the cases of forced and even violent recruitment to the armies of both sides, as well as all the cases of persecution of conscientious objectors, deserters and non-violent anti-war protestors.**



More info: [EBCO PRESS RELEASE: One year later: Stop the war NOW, give peace a chance! Premiere of the "Make Art, Not War!" film](#)

Photo: Vitaly Alekseenko, Copyright: Vitaly Alekseenko

#ObjectWarCampaign: [Russia, Belarus, Ukraine: Protection and asylum for deserters and conscientious objectors to military service](#)



**#OBJECT WAR
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Solidarity with conscientious objectors and deserters from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine **Sign now!**

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**VITALY ALEKSEENKO
IS A PRISONER OF
CONSCIENCE.
RELEASE HIM NOW!**

Ukrainian conscientious objector Vitaly Alekseenko was jailed on 23 February because of refusing to be part of the war.

The [European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](#) was founded in Brussels in 1979 as an umbrella structure for national associations of conscientious objectors in the European countries to promote the right to conscientious objection to preparations for, and participation in, war and any other type of military activity as a fundamental human right. EBCO enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe since 1998 and is a member of its Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations since 2005. EBCO is entitled to lodge collective complaints concerning the European Social Charter of the Council of Europe since 2021. EBCO provides expertise and legal opinions on behalf of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. EBCO is involved in drawing up the annual report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament on the application by the Member States of its resolutions on conscientious objection and civilian service, as determined in the "Bandrés Molet & Bindi Resolution" of 1994. EBCO is a full member of the European Youth Forum since 1995.