
**European
Bureau for
Conscientious
Objection**



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**War
Resisters'
International**



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To: Lithuanian Immigration authorities
E-mail: info@migracija.gov.lt

Subject: Vitali DVARASHYN, Prašymo Nr.: 2306-AS-0022

Brussels, 23 June 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO) and War Resisters' International (WRI), we are writing to you to express our grave concern about the case of Vitali DVARASHYN (Prašymo Nr.: 2306-AS-0022).

It has come to our attention that the residence permit of the above citizen of Belarus Vitali DVARASHYN, who was born on 12th August 1969 and has been living and working in Lithuania, was revoked on 26th April 2023, and that the Lithuanian authorities have furthermore declared him banned for five years from entry to the European Union. We have been informed that he is currently waiting for the examination of his application for refugee status in Lithuania (application date: 15th June 2023).

We urgently appeal to the Lithuanian authorities that Belarus should not be considered a safe country for return, especially for those who have already been identified as opponents of the Belarusian authorities, as is the case with Dvyrashyn, who has been publicly associated with the "No Means No" campaign in Belarus, and whose appearances in Facebook videos associated with that campaign render him liable to up to seven years' imprisonment under Belarussian law.

We also note that the apparent justification for the action taken was Dvyrashyn's former military service in Belarus. Paradoxically, this is precisely the reason why he is particularly concerned not to return to Belarus.

There are strong indications that in the near future Belarus will enter the war in Ukraine in support of Russia. The recent location of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus testifies to the closeness of the alliance between the two countries. In such an event a military reserve mobilisation similar to that which has taken place in Russia is extremely likely. There is a risk to all men deemed to be of military age of being called up in such a mobilisation, but priority would be given to those with previous military service and relevant training. As evidenced by a case which was pending under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Belarus does not in any circumstances recognise the right to conscientious objection to reserve service.

Dvarashyn graduated from Vasytkiv Military Aviation and Technical School in 1987 and joined the army. However, disappointed from the military, he made the decision to refuse to take up arms and voluntarily resigned from service, leaving the army on July 15, 1998. Since then, he has strived to lead a peaceful life and has avoided any involvement with the military or any other law enforcement structures.

We urge you to:

- a) refrain from deporting Dvyrashyn to Belarus, as well as any other person who has not been positively identified as an active supporter or agent of the current Belarusian authorities.
- b) immediately revoke his ban on entry to the EU
- c) give consideration, ideally, to granting him asylum in Lithuania as a conscientious objector to military service, but failing that at least issue him with new residence and work permits.

We understand that at least one other Belarussian resident in Lithuania – identified by the initials K.P. - who likewise served the minimum five years following graduation from Military Aviation and Technical School, is currently under similar threat, having been served with a ban on entry to Lithuania for five years or elsewhere in the EU for three years. Many other Belarussian men at particular risk of reserve mobilisation because of their previous service are known to have sought to avoid this by relocation in Lithuania or other countries in the region.

We are extremely worried about the news (www.lrt.lt/ru/novosti/17/1962447/voditeliam-iz-belarusi-i-rossii-v-litve-rezhe-prodlevaiut-vnzh-kak-proveriaiut-inostrantsev-i-kak-eto-vliiaet-na-litovskii-biznes-gruzoperevozok) that: "Negative decisions [are made] more often in relation to citizens of Belarus than in relation to other foreigners. About 300 Belarusians were refused," says Lucia Voishnis, Deputy Director of the Migration Department. What are the reasons for the more frequent refusals in relation to Belarusians, the representative of the Migration Department does not specify. He only says that the main reason for all refusals is that these people, by their presence in Lithuania, can "threaten the security of the Republic of Lithuania and the public order of the state.

We plead that Lithuania refrain in all cases from deporting to Belarus persons at risk of military mobilisation; that it give favourable considerations to applications from such persons for asylum as conscientious objectors to military service; and that failing this it agree to issue such persons with the necessary residence and work permits enabling them to remain in Lithuania and the EU.

Thank you in advance for your kind attention and careful consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Alexia Tsouni
EBCO President



Semih Sapmaz
WRI Coordinator



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.

War Resisters' International (WRI) was founded in London in 1921 as a global network of grassroots organisations, groups and individuals working together for a world without war. WRI remains committed to its founding declaration that 'War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war, and to strive for the removal of all causes of war'. Today WRI is a global pacifist and antimilitarist network with over 90 affiliated groups in 40 countries. WRI facilitates mutual support, by linking people together through publications, events and actions, initiating nonviolent campaigns that actively involve local groups and individuals, supporting those who oppose war and who challenge its causes, and promoting and educating people about pacifism and nonviolence. WRI runs three programmes of work that are important to the network: The Right to Refuse to Kill Programme, the Nonviolence Programme, and Countering the Militarisation of Youth.
