



International Peace Bureau (HQ)
Marienstr. 19-20
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Germany

To: Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

To: Maria Telalian, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Subject: Urgent Protection for Ukrainian Human Rights Defender and Conscientious Objector Yurii Sheliazhenko

Dear Commissioner Türk, dear Director Telalian,

On Thursday, 19 March 2026, Ukrainian Human Rights Defender and Conscientious Objector Yurii Sheliazhenko was apprehended by Ukrainian officers of the Pechersk District Police in Kyiv without a proper legal basis and without compliance with the procedural safeguards required by Ukrainian law. The authorities presented no clear legal grounds for the deprivation of liberty and Yurii's access to legal counsel was obstructed. We strongly suspect that Yurii is to be transferred to a Territorial Centre of Recruitment and Social Support (TCC) without due legal procedure.

Yurii is a well-known conscientious objector, which he has publicly declared since 1998. He is the Executive Secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, which has repeatedly been harassed by Ukrainian authorities in particular since the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022. Since then, Yurii has been repeatedly targeted with threats of imprisonment on faulty charges and forced conscription.

It is well documented that the right to conscientious objection is a fundamental human right, as outlined in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), based in the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right has likewise been recognized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). It is important to emphasize that the right to conscientious objection is of most vital importance in active wars and conflicts.

Yurii's case has been supported by a wide range of international and regional organizations, including Amnesty International, War Resisters International, European Bureau for Conscientious Objection, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Connection e.V., World Beyond War, and the International Peace Bureau (IPB). Our networks around the world are watching his case closely.

We strongly urge the United Nations and the OSCE to take urgent action to protect Yurii Sheliazhenko's right to conscientious objection and freedom of speech in Ukraine. This may include, but is not limited to, opening investigations into the Ukrainian authorities' violations of Yurii's human rights, releasing public statements expressing concern for Yurii's wellbeing, and emphasizing the inalienable right to conscientious objection and freedom of expression during war.

We count on your support to provide justice and accountability in Yurii's case.

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