



Language

The previous section D.2.b. provides a broad historical perspective on the role of conscription for military service and of how far the right to refuse to take up arms on conscientious grounds has been recognized by governments around the world, and at an international level. In the second half of the 20th century opposing compulsory military service was a major focus of peace activism in a number of Western European countries (see for example the annotated references in the Italian and Spanish sections at the end of this bibliography). The international anti-militarist War Resisters' International (WRI) supported individual conscientious objectors (COs) as well as campaigns of draft resistance. WRI also campaigned, together with other pacifist bodies, for international recognition of the right to conscientious objection. Resolutions in favour of CO rights have been passed by the Council of Europe and by the EU, and also by the UN.

After the end of the Cold War in the 1990s a total of 22 countries, especially in Europe, abandoned conscription, although it remained a part of national policy in many countries in other parts of the world. So there remained a significant role for peace activists in publicizing and opposing repressive policies of conscription, supporting COs harshly treated by their governments, and campaigning for wider and full recognition of CO rights.

The rising international tension between Russia and the west in the second decade of the 21st century, particularly since the Ukrainian Euromaidan protests of 2013-14 and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, led a number of European countries (including ex-Soviet states like the Ukraine, Georgia and Lithuania) to revert to a policy of military conscription. The rise in far right nationalistic governments has also promoted glorification of the military and encouraged illiberal policies towards COs in countries like Turkey and Russia, which have never abandoned conscription.

The treatment of COs by the Turkish government, which has never recognized a right to conscientious objection and penalizes COs in employment and access to pensions and social welfare for life (a form of 'civil death') has been condemned, by the European Court of Human Rights in many rulings since 2006. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe regretted in June 2020 the lack of progress in implementing legal recognition of COs, which the Turkish government had promised.

The bitter armed conflicts which have ravaged much of the Middle East and Libya have also intensified arguments for military preparedness, while several countries in the Gulf have introduced (or reintroduced) conscription,

Some countries have, historically, seen universal military service as a central citizen duty and a means of promoting national unity, and these principles can be extended to calls for forms of compulsory civilian service. Both these principles have been invoked in the move by the French government in 2019 to reintroduce a combined military and civilian form of conscription.

This section provides a number of references that give more detail on countries reverting to, or introducing, conscription and about recognition of and provision for conscientious objection. It also includes some information about COs in particular countries and about anti-militarist protests. It notes as well the recent extension of conscription to women in Norway and Sweden.

[Blessed are the Peacemakers: Military service in South Korea](#) [1], The Economist, 09/02/2019, pp. 48-48

This article was prompted by the Supreme Court's ruling in November 2018 that refusing to accept 21-14 months of military service for religious or conscientious reasons would no longer be a crime (overturning its own earlier 2003 ruling). The author notes that the small number of past objectors have usually been Jehovah's Witnesses, and that courts would in future judge the sincerity of pacifist convictions which they might reject, and that, if CO status were accepted, three years alternative service as a prison guard was required. But recognition of the right to be a CO makes it a more socially acceptable position, and might also help to mitigate the harsh conditions of military



service.

[Crimea: Conscription Violates International Law](#) [2], Human Rights Watch, 2019

Highlights how Russian authorities are conscripting men in occupied Crimea to serve in the Russian armed forces, although humanitarian law explicitly forbids Russia to compel Crimean residents to serve in Russian forces.

[CO Update](#) [3], War Resisters' International, 2020

This hundredth issue of CO Update (which brings together a number of news items already published by WRI in June 2020 as separate stories) begins by noting that the annual International Conscientious Objection Day on 15 May 2020 was celebrated round the world mostly by actions online. This issue includes the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement's condemnation of the new draconian bill designed to enforce conscription (referenced above), and the Council of Europe's reiterated appeal to Turkey to recognize conscientious objection (noted in the Introduction). It also covers court cases to oppose EU financing of Eritrean development projects that employing conscript labour; the Azerbaijan government's parliamentary announcement about a prospective Alternative Service Law (promised to the Council of Europe in 2003 but not delivered); the suspicious death of a Turkish air force conscript; and two opposing bills in the US Congress: to extend draft registration to women, or to end draft registration.

See also other monthly issues of CO update for detailed news from around the world.

[Ukrainian Pacifist Movement: Bill No 3553 of Zelensky's Military Dictatorship should be withdrawn](#) [4], War Resisters International, 2020

Full statement by the WRI affiliate Ukrainian Pacifist Movement condemning the bill introducing 'intolerable elements of military dictatorship'. The bill required mandatory military registration for employment and draconian fines and imprisonment for COs and those showing solidarity with them. It also empowered police to hunt for draftees on the streets and transfer them forcibly to army recruiting centres.

See also: 'The Brutality of Military Commissariats in Ukraine: Reaction of UN and MPs', *Truth Seeker*, 23 September 2019

This article explores the practice of arbitrary detention of conscripts in Ukraine. It includes footage (in Russian) of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement that opposes compulsory military service.

See also: Harding, Luke, 'Ukraine reintroduces conscription to counter threat of pro-Russian separatists', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2014.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/01/ukraine-military-conscript...> [5]

Abromaltis, Adomas, [Lithuania: To serve or not to serve in the army](#) [6], *Modern Diplomacy*, 18/02/2020,

This article discusses the response of young Lithuanians to their government's 2015 decision to reintroduce compulsory military service of nine months men aged between 19-26. The conscripts are randomly selected each year from all those eligible, defined to include Lithuanians living abroad. The author notes that most try to avoid military service, and may prefer to pay fines or risk imprisonment, which has led to the government looking for new means of enforcing compliance.

Ardemagni, Eleonora, [Building New Gulf States Through Conscription](#) [7], Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018

The author explores the introduction of conscription in the Gulf States through the lens of promoting national identities and instilling a spirit of sacrifice.

See also: Alterman, Jon and Margo Balboni, *Citizens in Training: Conscription and Nation-building in the United*



Arab Emirates, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) - Middle East Program, 2017, pp. 57.

<https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180312-Alterman-UAS-conscription.pdf>

This report analyzes the broad implications of introducing conscription for the wider society, such as the militarization of nationalism, gendering citizenship and social hierarchy.

Barany, Zoltan, [Why Have Three Gulf States Introduced the Draft?](#) [8], The RUSI Journal, Vol. 16, 2017, pp. 16-26

An analysis of the factors that have led to Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar introducing conscription for their armed forces. Barany argues that conscription is a response to emerging security needs, but is also designed to strengthen the link between state and citizen.

Bock, Pauline, [Why the French are Revolting against Emmanuel Macron's National Service Programme](#) [9], June 2019, New Statesman, 2019

France, which abolished conscription in 1997, reintroduced a new form of universal national service for 16 year olds in 2018, which extended to women as well as men and included forms of social as well as military service. Bock's article discusses the national debate at a time when the new form of service was being tested by over 2,000 young volunteers in a pilot programme. The eventual service will be compulsory, with no exceptions recognized, and penalties envisaged included being banned from taking the academic qualification the baccalaureat or a driving test.

See also: Williamson, Lucy, 'France's Macron brings back National Service', BBC News, 27 June 2018.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-44625625> [10]

This report stresses that Macron's original plan had been 'softened and broadened' with less focus on military experience and with an emphasis on fostering social cohesion.

Brock, Hannah, [The Return of Conscription?](#) [11], War Resisters' International, 2018

Brock assesses the changing context of her work for War Resisters' International since she began in 2012, when conscription had ended or been suspended in 22 states. She notes how regional fears of Russian aggression have influenced the reintroduction of conscription in former Soviet states (Ukraine, Georgia and Lithuania) and in Western Europe, where Sweden had reintroduced it. She also comments on Gulf States introducing or reintroducing conscription (as in Kuwait). The extension of conscription to women in both Norway and Sweden, opposed by some feminists but supported by women politicians, raises wider questions, which Brock considers, about the extent of social diversity in the armed forces. The article is extensively annotated, including references to protests against conscription and against the major military exercise 'Aurora' mounted by neutral Sweden in 2017, which incorporated NATO troops.

Persson, Alma ; Sundevall, Fia, [Conscripting Women: Gender, Solidarity and Military Service in Sweden 1965-2018](#) [12], Women's History Review, Vol. 28, issue 7, 2019, pp. 1039-1056

This article surveys Swedish debates about gender equality in the military since 1965, when military conscription of women was first proposed, up to the introduction of 'gender neutral' conscription in 2018. Using a wide range of sources, the authors note that women were assessed against the standard set by men, but that the 'woman soldier' became a solution for staff shortages and the need for particular qualities in particular situations, especially in international missions

Soresen, Martin, [Sweden Reinstates Conscription, with an Eye on Russia](#) [13], New York Times, 02/03/2017,



Report on the decision by Sweden to reintroduce conscription following alleged breaches of its airspace by Russian fighter jets.

See also: 'Sweden Brings Back Military Conscription amid Baltic Tensions' BBC, 2 March 2017.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39140100> [14]

Toomey, Leigh, [The Right to Conscientious Objection to Military Service: Recent Jurisprudence of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) [15], Human Rights Law Review, Vol. 19, issue 4, 2019, pp. 787-810

The article discusses the significance of the UN Working Group Opinion no.40/2018 for securing the right to conscientious objection and freedom of thought internationally.

Source URL (retrieved on 26/04/2024 -

15:04):<https://civilresistance.info/section/d-peace-movements-1945/d2-pacifist-protest-conscientious-objection-and-draft-resistance/d2c>

Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/blessed-are-peacemakers-military-service-south-korea> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/crimea-conscription-violates-international-law> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2020/co-update> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2020/ukrainian-pacifist-movement-bill-no-3553-zelenskys-military-dictatorship-should-be> [5] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/01/ukraine-military-conscription-pro-russia-separatists-donetsk> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2020/lithuania-serve-or-not-serve-army> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/building-new-gulf-states-through-conscription> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2017/why-have-three-gulf-states-introduced-draft> [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/why-french-are-revolting-against-emmanuel-macrons-national-service-programme> [10] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-44625625> [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2018/return-conscription-0> [12] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/conscriping-women-gender-solidarity-and-military-service-sweden-1965-2018> [13] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2017/sweden-reinstates-conscription-eye-russia> [14] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39140100> [15] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2019/right-conscientious-objection-military-service-recent-jurisprudence-united-nations>