



International Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Internationaler Versöhnungsbund  
Mouvement International de la Réconciliation  
Movimiento Internacional de la Reconciliación

*The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) is an international, spiritually-based movement composed of people who commit themselves to active nonviolence as a way of life and as a means of transformation --- personal, social, economic and political. IFOR has special consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC) and representation at UNESCO.*

Human Rights Council

14<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Agenda Item 6

Adoption of the UPR Report on Republic of Korea

Oral Intervention by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation

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In the Working Group, seven States<sup>1</sup> made recommendations to the Republic of Korea regarding its non-recognition of conscientious objection to military service and the imprisonment of conscientious objectors, all of which were combined in recommendation no. 53. An eighth State (Hungary), without making a formal recommendation, “encouraged the Republic of Korea ... to introduce alternative service for conscientious objectors before the next UPR cycle”.<sup>2</sup>

Recommendation 53 is not listed as enjoying the support of the Republic of Korea, although the Government did undertake to examine the issue “while taking into consideration the future changes in the security situation and formation of popular consensus.”<sup>3</sup>

This response is however wholly inadequate. It is no accident that in the review of the Republic of Korea the issue of conscientious objection to military service was raised by an unprecedented number of States. The Republic of Korea continues to imprison almost 500 young men each year for refusing military service on grounds of conscience. That is more than *ten times* as many as in any other State in the world.

The State cites the security situation and “the lack of public consensus” as “difficulties” in complying with the recommendation. But other States faced with similar “difficulties” have respected the right of conscientious objection to military service.

The International Fellowship Of Reconciliation calls upon the Republic of Korea to delay no longer in providing for conscientious objection to military service in legislation conforming to international standards, to take a positive role in the “formation of a popular consensus” on this issue, and meanwhile *immediately* to cease imprisoning those who refuse military service on grounds of conscience, giving them instead the opportunity to opt for a civilian alternative service when it becomes available.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/22/10, Para 44.

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/22/10/Add.1, Para 30.