

ifor



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, 24th Session
18th September 2013

Agenda Item 6

Adoption of the UPR Report on Turkmenistan

Oral Intervention by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation

Delivered by **Derek BRETT**

Contact email: derekubrett@gmail.com

In the course of his statement in the working group, the ambassador of Slovenia said, and I quote, "We also regret that the government has not yet taken a position on our previous **recommendations** regarding visits by special procedures and regarding conscientious objection to military service, which we would like to reiterate."

Unfortunately, this part of his statement was not reflected in the report of the working group, and the recommendations concerned were not included in the list. Turkmenistan did however accept a recommendation from the USA,¹ part of which called for it to respect the rights of conscientious objectors, and indicates in its replies that the issues raised in the recommendation are currently being explored. The International Fellowship of Reconciliation of course welcomes this, and looks forward hearing of concrete moves to bring in appropriate alternatives to military service for conscientious objectors. Meanwhile we are disturbed that recommendations from Slovenia and Norway that it should release all prisoners of conscience were rejected. A good first move would be to release the nine conscientious objectors currently imprisoned for their refusal to perform obligatory military service, all of whom had indicated their willingness to substitute a civilian alternative service if one was made available.

On a parallel topic, Mr Ambassador, just yesterday our colleagues from Forum 18 were informed on the telephone by an official of Turkmenistan's International Organisations Department that you would be explaining in the course of the adoption of the report Turkmenistan's assertion that "there are no laws restricting the activities of religious organizations and allowing the criminalization of religious activities only due to the absence of legal registration."² and how this could be reconciled with various provisions in the new code of administrative offences which came into force on 29th August, especially Article 77 of that code.

I listened carefully to your opening statement this afternoon, but am no wiser. I hope you address this issue in your closing remarks. [This sentence subject to amendment in the light of what is said in the debate]

1 Contained in Para 113.74

2 Reply to recommendation by Italy contained in Para 113.73 of the Working Group report.