



# THE BROKEN RIFLE

Newsletter of War Resisters' International

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## 1 December 2002: Prisoners for Peace Day

Special Focus on the Caucasus and Central Asia

### The quest for Caspian oil—at what human cost?

by Lindsay Barnes

International interest in the resource-rich former Soviet states in Central Asia and the Caucasus has surged over the past decade. Why has Caspian oil and gas suddenly become so significant to the global energy market? What are the consequences for the region's inhabitants as they struggle to forge fledgling democracies?

The Caspian basin is rich in oil and gas. The states bordering the basin are set to generate great wealth from the sales and transport of these reserves. Yet the Caspian reserves, though large, do not compare with the more abundant and cheaper Persian Gulf resources. Why is the world's most powerful nation, the US, investing so much time and financial resources in securing a stake in the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan)?

#### History of US Strategy

The US and some of its strongest supporters are dependent on an abundant supply of oil and gas. Yet the US is facing deteriorating relations with Saudi Arabia—its major supplier of oil—and Iran. Coupled with the rather volatile nature of the Middle East, it has become increasingly critical for the US to seek alternative supplies in order to reduce dependence on this source. To date, the injection of cash into the Caspian basin has been heavy. It is estimated that the US and the West have invested over \$50 billion in the area since it gained independence from the Soviet Union, according to a report by the Atlantic Council and the Central Asia – Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University. Part of this has been the US funding of multibillion-dollar pipeline projects in the south Caucasus. Yet the influx of foreign capital is proving to be a double-edged sword for the local people.

On the one hand, this investment means there is an external stake in promoting stability in strategic states. For instance, the US needs to maintain access to the region by encouraging a stable geopolitical order, allowing it to pursue its own direct economic interests. But the US stake is not this narrow.

#### New US plans

The US also has wider political and strategic interests that require stability in the region. Conflict

#### Editorial

Prisoners for Peace Day 2002 focuses on a region—or maybe we should say two regions—which normally do not receive much attention from the peace movement, or from the public in general: the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is high time the peace movement took notice of these regions—the military and the global oil business quietly managed to get in there already.

As this issue of *The Broken Rifle*—the special Prisoners for Peace issue—shows, peace movement attention is urgently needed to support human rights and peace activists in the region. None of the countries can be termed a proper democracy, and none of the countries meets international standards regarding conscientious objection.

With this issue of *The Broken Rifle*, War Resisters' International turns its attention to the Caucasus and Central Asia. We hope you will follow us—the region and WRI will need your support.

#### Andreas Speck

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Oil fields in Baku, Azerbaijan. Taken from: Steven Weinberg, *Inherit the sea. Caspian nations' dream of oil wealth.*

[www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)



## CONCODOC

WRI, as part of a coalition of CO support organisations, is hosting CONCODOC (CONscription and Conscientious Objection DOCUMENTation), a worldwide documentation on the situation of conscription and conscientious objection. It is the only one of its kind in the world. You can register for online viewing of all 180 CONCODOC country reports at [wri-irg.org/co/form.htm](http://wri-irg.org/co/form.htm); some reports are also available in Spanish. The CONCODOC project depends on information which it receives from groups all over the world—we rely on local CO and human rights activists, who are the experts on the situation in their country.

**Conscription and Conscientious Objection Documentation (CONCODOC)**  
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in the territories would have an impact on other areas of key strategic importance to the US—the Middle East, Europe and northeast Asia. To this end the US has focused on establishing a military presence.

Plans in progress for US military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan will help the world power implement a longterm strategy. „By entering into Central Asia, the US has achieved two important goals simultaneously—it occupied a strategic location between Russia and China, and has military bases from which it can operate in Afghanistan and Iran“ said Ucha Nanuashvili of War Resisters' International in Georgia. Afghanistan in particular presented a dilemma for the US.

Neighbouring three of the five Central Asian states, it was a hindrance to any attempt to stabilise the region. The country's civil war and the general impoverishment of its people threatened the security of its neighbours, including the South Caucasus. It was evident that support from some of Eurasia's major powers—China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia—for opposing sides in the Afghan conflict would decrease the likelihood of them accommodating each other's interests in the South Caucasus. The latter region, meanwhile, is also of critical interest.

The South Caucasus forms a transportation corridor for Caspian oil and gas, providing a link to the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea, and hence to supply the West. The US thus has a keen interest in ensuring the stability of the South Caucasus, particularly Georgia and Azerbaijan. Both look set to benefit from US diplomatic efforts to boost security—but similar encouragement for Armenia and the Central Asian states is less certain.

Armenia is the only one out of the eight states in question to remain in partnership with Russia and it also maintains close economic ties with Iran. As a result of US relations with both Russia and Iran declining in recent years, Armenia remains likely to be excluded from Western economic investment unless it becomes willing to compromise. On the other hand, continued foreign investment is almost

guaranteed for the development of the oil and gas reserves of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, but tougher security measures almost certainly will be required to satisfy the investors.

## Fragile security

Security in the region is fragile, however, symptomatic in part of poor social, economic and political development in the former Soviet Union. The new states are facing growing political discontent internally, while cross-border skirmishes are increasingly frequent. Another threat to stability is the drugs trade, especially in opium, yet a greater threat to securing peaceful development comes from a different source.

Ironically, while the countries bordering the Caspian Sea basin face the potential to generate great wealth from the sales and transport of their natural resources, there is considerable fear within these nations for their future. Of utmost importance is the question of who gets to control the resources and how will they be used?

Groups including Caspian Revenue Watch and the Central Eurasia Project are determined that the funds generated from these natural resources should benefit the inhabitants. By pushing for transparency in the use of revenues and accountability on the part of extraction companies and governments, they aim to ensure the promotion of civil society and the development of the region. They advocate the use of funds for poverty reduction, education and public health. Yet investment in education, health and similar services is actually waning, according to a report by the Atlantic Council and Central Asia – Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University. The governing regimes present a considerable dilemma.

On gaining independence from the Soviet Union and beginning a period of rapid transition, the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus briefly dealt in democratic rhetoric. However, their political leaders have since ruthlessly enforced their authority and exerted tight control over their respective populations, ironically mimicking the former Soviet-style government.

As such, many of the basic tenets of open society—such as rule of law, democracy, civic organisations and access to information—are under dire threat. Political leaders have tightened the reins in response to growing political discontent, thus accentuating internal instability, according to a report in „Open Society News“.

## Civil society under pressure

The prognosis for civil development in the near future is bleak.

The ranks of those voicing political and social alternatives have been thinned out. On the whole, political opposition has either been driven out, rendered ineffectual or forced to compromise. The only significant threat to state authority in Central Asia comes from armed militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbek-



Courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin



International Conscientious Objectors' Day in London, 15 May 2000

Photo: WRI

istan, Open Society Institute editor Justin Burke says.

Conflict and violence have led to widespread displacement of people. According to Ucha Nanuashvili, „In the past decade, millions of people have suffered the tragic effects of ethnic, religious, nationalist, racially-inspired and gang-related warfare waged in the South Caucasus region.“ It is estimated that this area has over one million refugees and internally displaced persons.

The independent press in the region has faced increasingly repressive measures in recent years. In consequence, a growing number of human rights activists and journalists have taken up the cudgel of issuing alerts of human rights abuses, using the internet to network and to source and disseminate information. „Their hope is to keep public discussion of democratic values on the agenda until the existing governments give way to a new political generation, one that is perhaps more willing to embrace pluralistic principles“, said Justin Burke.

He reported that in an interview with Open Society News, human rights activist Ramazan Dyrlydaev said human rights were not respected in Central Asia—there was no independent mass media and citizens could not realise their political rights, even though these rights were provided for in their constitutions.

The informational vacuum on human rights is a major problem, and has been since Soviet rule. People lack elementary knowledge of their rights, leaving them vulnerable to the tyranny of officials and their employers. Furthermore, „Ignorance of human rights hampers the development of democracy“, said Vladislav Okishev, chairman of the Pavlodar Consultative Information Center. His organisation is to set up a library in Kazakhstan containing information on human rights and will hold discussions and publish legal information to further inform people. Yet it is reported that the governments in question have shown increasing concern over

the work of these activists and are cracking down on their activities.

Since 11 September 2001, the authoritarian regimes of Central Asia have used the US-led ‘war on terrorism’ as an excuse to increase control over their respective societies by strengthening the role of security forces and going after political dissidents in the name of fighting extremism.

Yevginiy Zhovtis, director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, described all five states as „presidential republics with excessive concentration of power in the hands of the heads of state“ under which the executive branch of power prevails over that of the judiciary and legislature.

„Western criticism of the authoritarian regimes of Central Asian countries has been somewhat silenced, especially after a number of the countries of the region have allowed the usage of their territory or airspace by the anti-terrorist coalition.“

While many hoped that international interest would—and might still—increase the pressure for stability, and with it movement towards democracy, if anything the acts of repression have worsened in recent years. As the world energy market prepares to gain from the rich resources of the Caspian, what prospect there is for peace and development in the region remains unclear.

#### Sources:

EurasiaNet - [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

Open Society News - [www.eurasianet.org/policy\\_forum/crw.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/policy_forum/crw.shtml)

Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia - The Atlantic Council of the United States Central Asia

Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, by C. Fairbanks et al, 2001

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN)

## Situation in the army

In the former Soviet republics military service is quite unpopular due to the bad conditions, which are growing even worse. Food shortages, delayed wages, illnesses, and violations of basic human rights by officers are widespread, and continual fights with rebel troops in several regions make military service even more dangerous. This situation leads not only to a high suicide rate among recruits but also to an increase of different methods of avoiding service, including bribery, draft evasion, and desertion.

## The Broken Rifle

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If you want extra copies of this issue of *The Broken Rifle*, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website.

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# Prisoners for Peace Honour Roll 2002

## How the list works

♦ First are **prisoners' names** (in bold), followed by their sentence, then their place of imprisonment with  and, finally the reason for their detention

♦ Information about countries where prisoners have had their sentences suspended, or where sentences have been served or completed during the year are in *italics*.

## Armenia

### Amayak Karapetyan

03/11/00–02/05/03

### Armen Yeghiazaryan

30/03/01–29/03/04

### Artashes Atoyan

03/12/01–02/12/03

### Araik Sargsyan

12/12/01–11/12/03

### Armen Vardanyan

17/01/02–16/01/04

### Spartek Sargsyan

23/01/02–22/07/04

### Rafael Alaverdyan

30/01/02–29/01/04

### Araik Bagdasaryan

01/02/02–31/07/04

### Vardan Torosyan

01/02/02–31/07/04

### Yerem Kh'ikhatyan

26/02/02–25/02/04

### Karen Ambartsumyan

12/03/02–11/09/03

### Andrey Alaverdyan

15/03/02–14/03/05

### Abgar Minasyan

25/03/02–24/03/03

### Arman Avetisyan

09/04/02–08/04/04

### Hovannes Serobyan

17/04/02–16/04/04

### Gagik Gevirkyan

25/04/02–24/04/04


### Ambartsum Nersisyan

30/04/02–29/04/04

 Kosh Corrective Labour Colony, Kosh

### Armen Alikhanyan

29/04/02–28/10/03

 Vanadzor Prison

### Saak Oganesyanyan

02/06/02–

### Sarkis Oganesyanyan

02/06/02–


### Zhirayr Sukiasyan

03/06/02–

 Nubarashen Prison

### Henrik Hovinikeyan

14/01/02–30/07/04

 Nubarashen–2 Prison, Nubarashen, Yerevan

### Vahan Mkroyan

12/12/00–20/12/03

 Artik Corrective Labour Colony, Artik

### Artur Kazaryan

18/09/02–17/09/03

### Hratch Tatoyan

15/08/02–14/08/04

### Vagan Bayatyan

09/02–03/04 (18 months)


prison address not known

*All are Jehovah's Witnesses.*

## Belarus

### Yuri I Bendazhevsky

01/06/01–01/06/09


 Prison Minsk, ul Kavarijskaya 36, PO Box 36 K, Minsk

*Chernobyl researcher and whistleblower fraudulently convicted of corruption*

## Finland


### Oskar Lindman

(31/07/02–17/02/03)

 Helsingin työsiirtola, PL 36, 01531 Vantaa


### Janne Kuusisto

(06/05/02–23/11/02)

 Turun tutkintavankila, avo-osasto, PL 55, 20251 Turku


### Heikki Ulmanen

(30/09/02–17/04/03)

 Satakunnan vankila/Huittisten osasto, PL 42, 32701 Huittinen

### Toni Rautiainen

(26/06/02–22/12/02)


 Iskolan avovankila, PL 2, 74345 Kalliosuo

*All are imprisoned for total objection.*

## Israel

### Mordechai Vanunu


30/09/86–29/09/04

 Ashkelon Prison, Ashkelon, Israel

*Nuclear whistleblower convicted of espionage and treason—kidnapped on 30 September 1986 in Italy*

### Salman Salameh

04/09/02–


 Military Prison No4, Military Postal Number 02507, IDF, Israel

*Charged with desertion, awaiting trial. Druze conscientious objector.*

*In Israel conscientious objectors are imprisoned on an almost daily basis. Most of them serve prison term of 28 days, some several such prison terms in a row. Check the WRI website (<http://wri-irg.org>) for updates.*

## Puerto Rico

**Pedro Colon Almendes** #22192–069 one year – out Jan. 03

 MDC Guaynabo POB 2147, San Juan, PR 00922–2147

*Following a brief and minor scuffle during an anti-ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) protest at University of Puerto Rico, 04/30/01, Almenas was convicted of aggravated assault*

### Cacimiar Zenon Encarnacion

### Pedro Zenon Encarnacion

### Regaladon Miro Corcino


*All three are awaiting trial on 2 November 2002.*

*Trespass on Vieques bombing range in Puerto Rico in September 2002*

## Russia

### Grigory Pasko

25/12/01–25/12/05

 SIZO IZ–25/1, Partisanskij Prospekt 28b, 690106 Vladivostock, Russia

*Russian military journalist convicted of high treason for reporting on nuclear waste dumping by Russian fleet, already served 20 months awaiting original trial.*

## South Korea


*In South Korea, more than 1,200 Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned because of their conscientious objection to military service. They usually get prison sentences of three years.*

*More recently non-religious COs started to organize themselves. 12 students declared their conscientious objection publicly in September 2002.*

## Turkey

### Mehmet Bal

24/10/02–

 Adana 6. Kolordu Askeri Cezaevi, Adana, Turkey

*Conscientious objector, who turned CO after serving part of his military service. He presented himself on 24 October and is now imprisoned, awaiting trial.*



## Turkmenistan

### Nikolai Shelekhov

02/07/02–01/01/04

✉ prison address not known

### Kurban Zakirov

23/04/99–22/04/08

✉ Turkmenbashi labour colony Respublika, Turkmenistan, BPT–5,p/p V.S. g. Turkmenbashi

*Both are Jehovah's Witnesses.*

## USA

### Charles Booker–Hirsch #90962–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ FCI McKean, P.O. Box 8000, Bradford, PA 16701

### Joanna Cohen #90962–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ Federal Prison Camp Phoenix, 37930 N 45th Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85086

### Kenneth F Crowley #90963–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ Federal Prison Camp Beaumont, PO Box 26010, Beaumont, TX 77720

### Susan Daniels #90964–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

### Nancy Gowen #90969–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

### Abigail Miller #90692–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

### Kathleen Boylan #20047–016

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ Federal Prison Camp Alderson, Box A, Alderson, WV 24910

### Mary Dean #90965–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

### Kathleen Desautels #90966–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

### Kate Fontanazza #90967–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ Federal Prison Camp Greenville, PO Box 6000, Greenville, IL 62246

### Toni Flynn #90960–020

12/07/02–12/01/03

### Jerry Zawada #4995–045

12/07/02–12/01/03

✉ Crisp County Jail, 196 South Highway 300, Cordele, GA 31015

### Chantilly Geigle #90968–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ Federal Prison Camp Dublin, 5775 8th Street, Camp Paks, Dublin, CA 94568

### Peter Gelderloos #90688–202

12/07/02–12/01/03

✉ FCI Cumberland, 14601 Burbridge Road, SE, Cumberland, MD 21502–8771

### John Heid #13815–016

10/09/02–10/04/03

✉ Federal Prison Camp Schuylkill, Camp 2, Range B, PO Box 670, Minersville, PA 17954–0670

### Eric Johnson #90971–020 MB2

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ FCI Manchester, PO Box 3000, Manchester, KY 40962

### Janice Sevre–Duszynska #91104–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ FMC Lexington, 3301 Leestown Road, Lexington, KY 40511

### Niklan Jones–Lezama #0203593

12/09/02–12/03/03

✉ Sherburne County Jail, 13880 Highway 10NW, Elkriver, MN 55330–4609

### Rae Kramer #91069–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ FCI Danbury, Route 37, Danbury, CT 06811

### Palmer Legare #91097–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ FMC Devens PO Box 879, Devens, MA 01432

### Tom Mahedy #91098–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ FCI Fort Dix, PO Box 38, Fort Dix, NJ 08640

### Bill O'Donell #85713–011

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ Atwater USP, PO Box 01900, Atwater, CA 95301

### Michaele Pasquale #91102–020

10/09/02–10/03/03

✉ Federal Prison Camp Allenwood, PO Box 1000, Montgomery, PA 17752

### Richard M. Ring #91099–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ Federal Prison Camp Lewisburg, PO Box 2000, Lewisburg, PA 17837

### Michael Sobol #91105–020

10/09/02–10/12/02

✉ FCI Engelwood, 9595 w Quincy Ave, Littleton, CO 80123

### Fr. Louise Vitale #25803–048

02/10/02–02/01/03

address not known

*All these prisoners took part in an action at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning in September 2002.*

## Action

- On 1 December, put aside at least one hour and write at least four cards to prisoners;
- Get your peace group or class or meeting place to organise a card-writing session;
- Set up a stall in your town centre, perform a bit of street theatre, or do whatever else it takes to attract attention and interest.

## Sending cards and letters

- Always send your card in an envelope;
- Include a return name and address on the envelope;
- Be chatty and creative: send photos from your life, drawings;
- Tell prisoners what you are doing to stop war and war preparations;
- Don't write anything that might get the prisoner into trouble;
- Think about the sort of thing you'd like to receive if you were in prison;
- Don't begin, "You are so brave, I could never do what you have done";
- Don't expect the prisoner to reply;
- Remember—next year it could be you...

## Support our future work

For 45 years, War Resisters' International has publicised the names and stories of prisoners of conscience. Help them keep up the tradition:

- Send in a special PFP donation to WRI to help fund next year's research.
- Give a Peace News subscription to a prisoner on our list (or provide us with the name and address of someone not on our list).

Send contributions to: War Resisters' International, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, Britain (tel +44 20 7278 4040; fax 7278 0444; email [office@wri-irg.org](mailto:office@wri-irg.org)). Your outreach to prisoners does make a difference. Show your solidarity!

Online version

See <http://www.wri-irg.org> for all four language versions of the PFP 2002 pack.



## New CO law in Russia

Finally, in summer 2002, the Russian state Duma passed a law on alternative service, which regulates the right to conscientious objection. It was finally signed by President Putin on 28 July 2002, and will come into force on 1 January 2004. What on first view might be seen as a victory for CO groups looks very much like an attempt by the military apparatus to keep matters under control.

According to article 4 of the new law, alternative civil service can be performed—among other options—in organisations of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and other forces, as non-combatant personnel. On top of that, the length of service is 1.75 times that of military service (but “only” 1.5 times in the case of service in the armed forces).

The procedure to apply for alternative civilian service is also very restrictive: an application has to be made 6 months before call-up (which means at the age of 17), and needs to be accompanied by quite some paperwork. On top of that, personal appearance in front of the draft commission is required—an act of inquisition.

Organisations in Russia are now campaigning against the law on alternative civil service. It will be challenged in the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation. Human rights organisations termed the bill “the law on alternative slavery”, and promote the abolition of conscription in Russia as the real alternative.

# An unrecognised human right: Conscientious objection in the Caucasus and Central Asia

by **Silke Makowski**

In the region of Caucasus and Central Asia, no country offers a free choice between military service and alternative service, most of them even having no legal basis for a substitute service at all. The few states that passed a law on some kind of alternative service haven't implemented it according to international standards: in Georgia, substitute service isn't available in practice and in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, large bribes are necessary to perform it. Apart from that, these services are of rather punitive length and not completely civilian, especially the Uzbek one as it includes a short military training.

Being members of the Council of Europe (CoE), the Caucasus states have to meet the conscientious objection standards of Recommendation 1518, which was adopted in 2001. It declares the right of all members of the army to be registered as conscientious objectors (COs) at any time and to be informed about the circumstances and procedure of obtaining the status of a CO, also recommending a completely civilian and non-punitive alternative to military service. Although the member states should guarantee those rights, the Georgian law shows many shortcomings, while Armenia and Azerbaijan haven't passed any law so far.

## Caucasus

### Armenia

Legislation originally didn't provide the right to conscientious objection but, as a result of its membership in the CoE, the Armenian government has to pass a law on alternative service by 2003.

Two different bills have been discussed during recent months without being passed. Both versions of the envisaged alternative service are punitive in length (42 months, i.e. 18 months longer than military service) as well as in professional restrictions: people who have performed alternative service are precluded from holding official posts. It would also be available for certain religious groups only and take place within the army, thus being a kind of unarmed military service.

During recent years, persecution has even increased, and COs normally face several years' prison terms. After a CoE requirement, the Armenian government pardoned and released 37 Jehovah's Witnesses in June 2001, but new trials followed shortly afterwards. According to the Ministry of Justice, in 2001, 75 people were found guilty of “avoiding military service”, 32 of them being Jehovah's Witnesses.

At the moment, at least 25 Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned in Armenia.

### Azerbaijan

The right to perform alternative military service on grounds of belief is included in the Azeri 1995 Constitution. Yet decrees regulating alternative military service never have been imple-

mented.

Due to its CoE membership, Azerbaijan has to provide the right to conscientious objection. An amendment to the Constitution replacing the former phrase of “alternative military service” by “alternative service” is in force since a referendum in August and a new law on alternative service is going to be passed by December. Detailed information about the envisaged service isn't available so far and it isn't certain that if the law will be implemented soon. At the moment there are no cases of imprisoned COs, and investigations against two Jehovah's Witnesses have been stopped because of the legal changes. About 2,600 deserters and draft evaders are in prison but nothing is known about their reasons of avoiding military service.

### Georgia

Although different laws on alternative service have been passed since 1991, none has been implemented. The latest Law on Civilian Alternative Service, passed in 1997, also doesn't meet the CoE standards, as the envisaged substitute service is of punitive length (36 months, compared to 24 months' military service) and probably not completely civilian.

In practice no impartial decision-making procedures for applying for substitute service have been established yet, although more than 300 people have requested arrangements for alternative service. Exemption from military service can only be gained by bribery.

During recent years, Georgian authorities often haven't called up Jehovah's Witnesses in order to avoid open conscientious objection. As most young men don't want to serve—mainly because of the poor conditions within the army—the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Georgia has increased rapidly.

According to the Ministry of Defence, there are 167 draft evaders and deserters in prison at the moment but it isn't clear if any of them had conscientious objections.

### Abkhazia

The 1994 Constitution of the self-declared republic of Abkhazia, which isn't internationally recognised but regarded as a Georgian region, doesn't include the right to an alternative to military service, and in spite of discussions about a law on a civilian substitute service last



year there have been no further developments. Between 1995 and 2000, at least 30 Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned for refusing to serve in the army, one of them being still in prison in December 2001.

## Central Asia

### Kazakhstan

The right to conscientious objection isn't legally recognized and there are no provisions for substitute service. Various discussions about alternative army service didn't aim at a civil alternative but at flexibility within military service, combining a short military training with different kinds of labour.

Persecution of COs, especially Jehovah's Witnesses, had been a continual problem for many years. As the Military Service Act allows "persons in holy orders" to be exempted from military service, the Kazakh Jehovah's Witnesses came to an agreement with the government in 1997 declaring all members of their faith religious ministers. Since then, there haven't been any reports about imprisoned COs.

### Kyrgyzstan

Alternative service has a comparatively long tradition in Kyrgyzstan with a first law being passed in 1992. The 2001 Law on Alternative Service shortened the length of substitute service from 36 to 24 months, while the military service term was reduced from 24 to 12 months this year.

According to the new law, substitute service can be performed in a non-military state institution; 20 per cent of the salary is transferred to the Ministry of Defence. Performing alternative service is widespread: In spring 2001, over 70 per cent didn't want to serve in the army and nearly half of the 3,500 conscripts were called up for alternative service. In addition to that, the continually increasing number of desertions proves to be an enormous problem for the only 12,000-strong Kyrgyz army.

In November 2001, there was a case of a CO being harassed by the Kyrgyz authorities: Baptist Dmitri Shukhov was sent for a psychiatric investigation after his refusal to swear the military oath. Officials had claimed before that he was ineligible for alternative service because his church refuses to register.

### Tajikistan

The right to conscientious objection isn't included in Tajik legislation; consequently there's no legal basis for performing any kind of substitute service at the moment and it won't be introduced during the coming years.

Nothing is known about people refusing to perform military service on religious or ethical grounds but desertion and draft evasion are widespread. An increasing number of young men avoid military service by going abroad to look for work. The extent of desertion even

made it necessary to include deserters in a 2001 amnesty if they were willing to serve afterwards.

### Turkmenistan

Turkmen legislation doesn't provide for the right to refuse military service and a law on a civilian alternative doesn't seem probable during the next few years.

COs, mostly members of the Jehovah's Witnesses and similar religious groups, face several years' imprisonment under criminal law and often serve their sentences in labour colonies under harsh conditions. In lots of cases, release has been denied if the prisoners refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the president on grounds of conscience.

In September 2002 at least 2 Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned because of their conscientious objection.

### Uzbekistan

The 1992 Law on Alternative Service provides a substitute service of 24 months on religious grounds. Actually it isn't possible to perform it without bribery; if the bribe is high enough it is even possible to avoid both kinds of service. Substitute service is very popular: the number of people called up for alternative service is more than three times higher than the number of those serving in the army.

The so-called alternative service isn't civilian as it also includes two months' basic military training. During the rest of the time it normally entails doing low-paid menial work with about 20 per cent of the salary transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

At the moment there are discussions about a new law on alternative service but a bill hasn't been prepared yet.

In practice COs who don't pay bribes are still punished: every year, several Jehovah's Witnesses are sentenced to suspended terms of imprisonment or high fines.

## Regional contacts

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### Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan

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# Get involved!

## Support COs in prison: co-alerts

In many countries, prison is still the fate of conscientious objectors. Thousands of COs are still in prison—in South Korea, Israel, Finland, Spain, and many other countries. Despite many countries having introduced laws on conscientious objection, many COs still face imprisonment, because they either don't fit into the authorities' criteria, or they refuse to perform any alternative service. War Resisters' International supports conscientious objectors who are imprisoned because of their conscientious objection, or face repression by the state or state-like entities.

Co-alerts, sent out by email as soon as the WRI office receives information on the imprisonment or trial of a conscientious objector, are a powerful tool to mobilise support and protest.

Co-alerts are available by email (send a message to [majordomo@wri-irg.org](mailto:majordomo@wri-irg.org) with the text subscribe co-alert in the body of the message) or on the internet at [wri-irg.org/cgi/news.cgi](http://wri-irg.org/cgi/news.cgi).

The WRI office also needs more information on imprisoned conscientious objectors from all over the world.

Get in touch with us at:

**War Resisters' International**  
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London N1 9DX  
Britain  
tel +44-20-7278 4040  
fax: +44-20-7278 0444  
email [concodoc@wri-irg.org](mailto:concodoc@wri-irg.org)  
<http://wri-irg.org/cgi/news.cgi>

# War Resisters International

—a nonviolent movement to end war

War Resisters' International was founded in 1921 under the name "Paco". It was and is based on the WRI declaration:

"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."

War Resisters' International exists to promote nonviolent action against the causes of war, and to support and connect people around the world who refuse to take part in war or the preparation of war.

## Conscientious objection

Conscientious objection has always been at the very centre of WRI's policy. WRI's declaration not to support any kind of war is a call to refuse to serve in any military or armed forces, a call to conscientious objection.

War Resisters' International supports all con-

scientious objectors, whether they are willing to perform a substitute service (in countries where this option exists) or not. War Resisters' International does not judge a person's motives for refusing to kill, and values a person's individual decision not to take part in war and preparation for war as an important step to ending wars.

## No to war

WRI will never endorse any kind of war, whether it is waged by a state, by a "liberation army", or under the auspices of the United Nations, even if it is called a "humanitarian military intervention". Wars, however noble the rhetoric, are invariably used to serve some power-political or economic interest. We know where war leads—to suffering and destruction, to rape and organised crime, to betrayal of values and to new structures of domination.

# Support Prisoners for Peace

## Support War Resisters' International

Prisoners for Peace need our support. War Resisters' International needs your support to be able to support Prisoners for Peace!

- I want to take part in the CO-alert network.  
My email address is: .....
- I donate a 1-year subscription of *Peace News* to a prisoner (£15)  
Name of prisoner: .....
- I make a donation of £.....
- Please put me on your mailing list and keep me informed about the work of WRI
- Please send me a sample copy of *Peace News*



**Please send your donation and this form to:**

War Resisters' International  
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Britain

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# Thank you for your solidarity