

URGENT ACTION

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR UNLAWFULLY DETAINED

Conscientious objector Ivan Mikhailau was arrested by police in the Belarusian capital Minsk on 15 December after refusing to perform military service. A court hearing has been set for 29 January. If found guilty, he could face six months' imprisonment.

Twenty-one-year-old **Ivan Mikhailau** was arrested for refusing to perform military service. He refused because he is an active member of the Messianic Jewish community and bearing arms contradicts his religious beliefs. A court hearing has been set for 29 January at the Minsk District Court. Ivan Mikhailau is being kept in detention until the hearing.

According to his lawyer, Ivan Mikhailau had informed the Minsk district military that he was unable to carry out military service for religious reasons and instead requested to take part in civilian service as an alternative to military service. The authorities denied his request on the grounds that his claim could not be considered as an alternative civilian service does not exist. Ivan Mikhailau approached the military authorities a second time asking if he could substitute military service with service in the reserves. The authorities denied the second request and assigned Ivan Mikhailau to full-time military service. He was then arrested on 15 December.

Ivan Mikhailau is the oldest son in a family with seven children and supports the family to a large extent. In his appeal he listed his family's dependence on his support as an additional reason why he was requesting an exemption from military service.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Belarusian, Russian or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to release Ivan Mikhailau immediately and unconditionally;
- calling on them to ensure that until an alternative civilian service is implemented, Ivan Mikhailau and other conscientious objectors are either excluded from military service altogether or permitted to wait until an alternative service is in place;
- urging them to adopt a law that recognizes and guarantees the right to conscientious objection to military service and provides for a genuinely civilian alternative that is not punitive in length;
- reminding that Belarus is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil Political Rights, and is therefore obliged to recognize the right to conscientious objection.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 MARCH 2010 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk
Belarus

Fax: +375 17 226 06 10

Email President from:

<http://www.president.gov.by/en/press10650.html>

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Internal Affairs

Vladimir Naumov
Ul. Gorodskoi Val 2
220050 Minsk
Belarus

Fax: +375 17 203 99 18

Email: miapress@nsys.by

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Prosecutor General

Grigory Alekseevich
Ul. Internatsionalnaya 22
220050 g. Minsk
Belarus

Fax: +375 17 226 42 52

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Military service is compulsory in Belarus for all males between the age of 18 and 27 and there is no alternative civilian service.

The right to refuse military service for reasons of conscience is inherent in the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Belarus is a party.

Amnesty International considers a conscientious objector to be any person who, for reasons of conscience or profound conviction, refuses to perform service in the armed forces, or any other direct or indirect participation in wars or armed conflicts. This can include refusal to participate in a war because one disagrees with its aims or the manner in which it is being waged, even if one does not oppose taking part in all wars. Amnesty International considers a person to be a prisoner of conscience when they are detained or imprisoned solely because they have been denied their right to register an objection or to perform a genuinely civilian alternative service. They would also be prisoners of conscience if imprisoned for leaving the armed forces without authorization for reasons of conscience, if they have taken reasonable steps to secure release from military obligations.

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