



Conscience and Peace Tax International

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IRAN**

Conscientious objection to military service and related issues

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Recent information on military service in Iran is not easy to obtain. In its initial report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, submitted in 1998, Iran indicated that “every Iranian citizen is eligible for military service as of 21 March of the year he reaches 19 [...] at age 19 Iranian nationals are summoned to the Conscription Office to clarify their draft status [...] those persons found eligible to serve are recruited for military service during the year they have reached the age of 19.”¹ There was no mention of military service in Iran's second periodic report under the CRC, delivered in 2008.

During the war with Iraq, the period of military service was 28 months. This was reduced in 1988 to 24 months.² It has subsequently been shortened again and was 18 months in 2006.³ It was reported that in June 2009 the *Majlis* approved further, stepped, shortenings of the period of service for conscripts with higher education qualifications, ranging from two months for those with diplomas to ten months for holders of doctorates, which are to take effect from 2011.⁴

The army maintains 220,000 conscripts alongside 130,000 regular troops.⁵ This compares with well over 600,000 young men reaching “militarily significant age” each year.⁶ Clearly, even after medical examination and the exemption of sole family breadwinners and sons and brothers children of “martyrs of the revolution” (ie those killed in the Iraq war), there is a surplus of manpower available. The selection of those who actually serve is thus made by ballot, but it was reported in the 1990s believed that those not selected were, like students, granted a deferment, rather than exemption, meaning that they might leave the country only in exceptional circumstances, for three months, and on payment of a deposit. In this context, it is believed that Iran is one of the countries

¹ Initial Report of Iran under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC/C/41/Add.5), 23 July 1998, para 172.

² Horeman, B. & Stolwijk, M., Refusing to Bear Arms, War Resisters International, London, 1998

³ Cordesman, A.H. & Al Rodhan, K.R., The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War: Iran, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 2006.

⁴ War Resisters International, “Iran to shorten military service from 2011”, CO Update No.49, July/August 2009.

⁵ The Military Balance 2010 (International Institute for Security Studies, London), p251.

⁶ CIA World Factbook (www.cia.gov), accessed 13th August, 2010

where certification of military service status is a prerequisite for such purposes as obtaining a passport or driving licence or employment in the public sector. It was also reported that Iranians living abroad might purchase exemption for a fee of between \$1000 and \$3000; for those who left the country before March 1990, this option had been available only to graduates and on payment of a fee of \$16,600.⁷

It is not recorded that any provision exists in Iran to accommodate conscientious objectors to military service. Although there have been no reports of individual cases, this does not prove that such objections are unknown; it could well be that any potential conscientious objector might have felt unsafe in expressing these, particularly to the recruitment authorities.

Suggestion for the List of Issues

CPTI suggests that Iran be asked whether any recruits have ever asserted conscientious objections to military service, and whether it has any provisions to deal with such a situation. erwise apply?

⁷ Horeman & Stolwijk, op cit.