



Conscience and Peace Tax International

Internacional de Conciencia e Impuestos para la Paz

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International non-profit organization (Belgium 15.075/96)

Bruineveld 11 · B-3010 Leuven · Belgium · Ph.: +32.16.254011 · e-*: cpti@cpti.ws

Belgian account: 000-1709814-92 · IBAN: BE12 0001 7098 1492 · BIC: BPOTBEB1

www.cpti.ws

Contact:

Derek Brett

CPTI Representative to UN Geneva

dubrett@talk21.com

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Conscientious objection to military service and related issues

JORDAN

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CPTI is disturbed that the reintroduction of conscription which was announced in 2007 is not reported to have been accompanied by any provisions to accommodate conscientious objectors to military service.

Background

Obligatory military training in the independent Jordan was first reported in 1955; a Law of December 1967 subsequently made male citizens aged between 18 and 40 liable to two years' obligatory military service.¹ This was retained in the 1976 National Service Law which was apparently replaced by the Compulsory Military Service Act (No. 23) of 1986. Conscription was suspended, but the relevant legislation not repealed, in 1992.²

In 1983, a People's Army Law required all male and female students in secondary or higher education, and all other males between the ages of 16 and 55 who had not performed military service to undergo militia training in a new auxiliary force; service was also open on a voluntary basis to women aged between 16 and 45. The People's Army was initially intended to reach a strength of 200,000; in practice it does not seem to have grown beyond about 35,000.³ Sources differ as to whether this force

¹ Prasad, D. & Smythe, T., Conscription -a world survey: compulsory military service and resistance to it, War Resisters International, London, 1968, p84.

² As reported by Jordan in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General to 53rd Commission on Human Rights, prepared pursuant to Commission resolution 1995/83 (E/CN.4/1997/99)

³ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Child Soldiers Global Report 2001 p216.

remains functional; it continues to be listed each year (with the original age limits) by the “Military Balance”.⁴

In March 2007 the decision to reinstate conscription was announced. In an inconsistency with earlier information, this was described as having been suspended in 1999. The first reports⁵ referred to a shortened period of service of three months, however when amendments to the Compulsory Military Service Act of 1986 were passed by Parliament the following month they reinstated the original two year period of service. The exemptions previously granted to only sons and to brothers of those who had died in military service were revoked, leaving medical reasons as the only grounds for exemption, although deferment would be possible for students in higher education.⁶

The 1986 Act contained no provisions relating to conscientious objection, and there have been no reports that any were introduced in the course of the 2007 amendments. When the Human Rights Committee considered Jordan's Second Periodic Report, in 1994, obligatory military recruitment was suspended. Therefore although the Concluding Observations⁷ referred broadly to the Committee's concerns regarding Article 18, there was no specific cause to refer the question of conscientious objection to military service. As this is no longer the case:

CPTI suggests that Jordan be asked whether the Compulsory Military Service Act, as amended when reimplemented in 2007, contains any provisions governing the procedures to be followed in cases of conscientious objection to military service, and, if not, what action it is contemplating in order to adhere with the requirements of Article 18 of the Covenant in this respect.

Jordan might also be asked to clarify whether the “People's Army” militia still functions and if so whether persons receive obligatory military training in that force and whether there is any provision for conscientious objection.

⁴ Most recently, The Military Balance 2010 (International Institute for Security Studies, London) p258.

⁵ Defense News, 8 March 2007; Jordan Information Center, 15 and 21 March, 2007, quoted in War Resisters International, CO Update No. 28, April 2007. (www.wri-irg.org)

⁶ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, p192.

⁷ CCPR/C/79/Add.35; A/49/40, paras.226-244