



# Conscience and Peace Tax International

**Internacional de Conciencia e Impuestos para la Paz**

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN

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## **Submission to the 87th Session of the Human Rights Committee: July 2006:**

### **Conscientious Objection to Military Service: Issues for the Task Forces on State Reports**

#### **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**

Paragraph 95 of the State Report (CCPR/C/BIH/1), concerning military service and conscientious objection, has, according to information we have received from Prigovir BiH (the conscientious objectors' organisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina), been overtaken by events. On 29<sup>th</sup> September 2005, the Parliament passed a Defence Reform Act. As well as reducing the armed forces from approximately 25,000 personnel under the separate Ministries of Defence (and legislation) of the two "entities" to a single unified national force of 10,000, this Act ended conscription for military service (which had in practice already been suspended) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006. It also ended the alternative service systems which had been set up in the two entities for conscientious objectors to military service. More than 3,000 conscientious objectors had been registered since the provisions had first been introduced in the 1996 Military Service Laws of the two entities.

Clarification would be welcome as to whether the abolition of obligatory military service is absolute, or whether there are any provisions allowing its reinstatement in time of war or national emergency, and also as to the situation of the large number of former conscripts who have been listed on the reserve strength of the armed forces of the two entities. Are they now automatically released from reservist duties; if not, is there any provision for individuals to apply for release as conscientious objectors?

Along with other States, Bosnia-Herzegovina ought also be encouraged to guarantee the continued protection of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion by making clear legislative provision to enable serving members of the military who develop a conscientious objection to apply at any time for release on such grounds.

23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2006