



# 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 95th Session of the Human Rights Committee:**

**March 2009**

### **Conscientious Objection to Military Service:**

#### **CROATIA**

Obligatory military service in Croatia was suspended with effect from the beginning of 2008. In the event of its reintroduction in time of war or national emergency, the provisions of the 2003 Law on Civilian Service would again apply.<sup>1</sup> In many respects these provisions came close to the best international standards. There were no time limits on the lodging of applications - whether before or during military service, or subsequently as a reservist. Applications which met rather minimal criteria with regard to the grounds stated were accepted without further investigation. Like other countries in the region, Croatia retained an ill-conceived clause which debarred anyone who had ever held a firearms licence from being recognised as a conscientious objector<sup>2</sup>, and it might have been questioned whether the discrepancy between six months' military service and eight months' alternative civilian service was objectively justified, but in isolation these are relatively minor quibbles.

Two residual issues remain:.

Registration for military service, and medical examination to determine fitness for such service, have not been suspended. In such circumstances it always seems illogical that those registering should not have the opportunity, if they so choose, to declare conscientious objection to military service at this stage rather than that in the short term they should feel obliged - in however small a way - to compromise their principles; - and in the longer term that the mobilisation system should at what might be a time of extreme urgency be clogged up with the processing of such applications. More importantly, having progressed to completely "professional" armed forces, Croatia has apparently not yet confronted the possibility that a member of such forces might develop a conscientious objection. Exactly what would be the situation of a service-man or -woman who sought early release on these grounds? Given its good credentials in other respects, Croatia might usefully be encouraged to join those States which have made formal provision for such an eventuality.

30<sup>th</sup> December, 2008.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wri-irg.org/programmes/world\\_survey/country\\_report/en/Croatia](http://www.wri-irg.org/programmes/world_survey/country_report/en/Croatia).

<sup>2</sup> Stolwijk, M., The Right to Conscientious Objection in Europe: A Review of the Current Situation, Quaker Council on European Affairs, Brussels, 2005, p