



## APPEAL TO SUPPORT UKRAINIAN PACIFIST YURII SHELIAZHENKO #FreePeaceSpeech

August 5<sup>th</sup> 2023

On behalf of the signatory branches of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), we express our dismay and deep concern for the decision to charge Mr. Yuri Sheliazhenko, executive secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement (UPM), with “justification of Russian aggression”.

As reported, on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023 Mr. Sheliazhenko has been victim of harassment by Security Service of Ukraine’s (SBU) who broke into his apartment in Kyiv and searched it, seizing his laptop, mobile phone and documents of the UPM.

The charge is based solely on the document [“Peace Agenda for Ukraine and the world”](#) which has been adopted by the UPM on the 2022 International day of Peace, September 21<sup>st</sup>, and subsequently sent to the Office of the President of Ukraine. The document calls for peace, condemns the Russian aggression, urges protection of the human right to refuse to kill and appeals for a peaceful solution of the armed conflict.

We share the alarm expressed by many organizations over the above events.

We are members of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, the oldest spiritual based peace movement, founded in 1914 with the commitment to nonviolence and peace by refusing to bear weapons and objecting to war.

The right to conscientious objection to military service is a human right inherent to the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and is directly linked to the right to peace.

Mr. Sheliazhenko and the UPM have been diligently working for peace and have been making outstanding contributions to protect human rights anywhere even among the hardest context such as war is. They are human rights defenders working to protect the rights of conscientious objectors in Ukraine and to foster peace.

For these same reasons the International Peace Bureau has just chosen to [nominate the UPM for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize](#).

Standing for peace and human rights is the most precious investment for the wellbeing of humankind. Mr. Sheliazhenko has shown and declared on several occasions his commitment to nonviolence and this represents the actual hope for a world without the tragedy of war.

**We call on the Ukrainian authorities and the Court which will rule on Sheliazhenko’s case to drop all charges and fully protect his human rights, in line with international standards.**

We are witnessing too often the repression and stigma on peace speech and the consequent violation of human rights; in Ukraine’s neighbouring country, Russia, manifesting against war is criminalized.

**We appeal therefore to the Ukrainian government to protect peace speech (#FreePeaceSpeech) in the country and ensure the safety of those who stand for it and of those who object war because of their conscience.**

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a non-derogable right, like freedom of expression, and it continues to apply regardless of a situation of armed conflict.

*Ermete Ferraro*, President of [Movimento Internazionale della Riconciliazione \(MIR\)](#) – Italy

*Kiyoshi Mito*, Chairman of [Fellowship of Reconciliation \(JFOR\)](#) – Japan

*Makios Phiri*, Coordinator of [Fellowship of Reconciliation](#) – Zimbabwe

*Henk Baars*, Chairman of [Kerk en Vrede](#) – The Netherlands

*Irmgard Ehrenberger*, Executive director of [Internationaler Versöhnungsbund](#) – Austria