



Yurii Sheliazhenko – arbitrarily detained to be forcibly conscripted – a victim of cruel and humiliating treatment

March 24th, 2026

The undersigned organisations express their deep dismay over what happened to Mr. Yurii Sheliazhenko and strongly condemn the serious human rights violations committed against him by the Ukrainian authorities.

Yurii Sheliazhenko was forcibly taken by the Ukrainian police in Kyiv on the evening of March 19th and arbitrarily deprived of his liberty for over 44 hours without his family or lawyer being able to ascertain his whereabouts or condition (see [statement released on March 19th](#)).

He was taken to the Pechersk District Police Station and later to the Svyatoshyn Military Registration and Enlistment Office.

His phone has been seized and he could not communicate, nor could he have legal assistance against the unlawful deprivation of liberty, in blatant violation of Ukrainian and international human rights law.

He described his brutal experience in a [video testimony on YouTube](#) where he also reported physical violence - he has been bitten and pepper-sprayed, for instance - and humiliating treatment while arbitrarily detained. His concluding words in his video testimony are *"Now I know at least to some degree how forcibly detained conscientious objectors are feeling. And it will inspire me to work more and better"*.

Yurii Sheliazhenko is a well-known conscientious objector, publicly declared since 1998, a pacifist and a human rights defender. He is also an academic, the executive secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement (member organisation of War Resisters International), Director of the Institute of Peace and Law in Ukraine, Council member of the International Peace Bureau (IPB), and a Board member of the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection and of World Beyond War.

We are relieved that he is now free and no longer detained. However, he has endured a traumatic experience, and we remain extremely alarmed because he continues to remain under constant threat of forced conscription (see [statement released on January 23rd](#)), in violation of Ukrainian domestic law and international human rights standards.

Therefore, we continue to call for his immediate protection.¹

We urge the Ukrainian authorities to:

- **Promptly and duly investigate the incident, which amounts to extremely serious human rights violations, and ensure full accountability;**
- **Withdraw from persecuting and criminalizing peace activists and conscientious objectors to military service like Mr. Yurii Sheliazhenko;**
- **Refrain from any practices of forced mobilization;**
- **Release all conscientious objectors to military service currently imprisoned in Ukraine.**

[Connection e.V.](#)

[European Bureau for Conscientious Objection \(EBCO\)](#)

[International Fellowship of Reconciliation \(IFOR\)](#)

[International Peace Bureau \(IPB\)](#)

[War Resisters' International \(WRI\)](#)

[World BEYOND War \(WBW\)](#)

Additional organisations are invited to endorse this statement.

¹ <https://worldbeyondwar.org/yurii-sheliazhenko-abducted/>; <https://ipb.org/urgent-action-free-conscientious-objector-yurii-sheliazhenko/>.