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Human Rights Council
52nd session. Item 6. UPR of Finland
Delivered by Christophe Barbey
Geneva, 27th of March 2023

Dear Conscientious Human Beings,
Monsieur le Vice-Président,
Dear Delegation of Finland,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Greetings of peace and conscience,

Conscientious objection is one of the tools needed to advance towards comprehensive peace policies.

This is freedom of conscience: I object. I refuse. Not in my name. I do not undersign for something I cannot agree with. My conscience does not allow me to let this happen, or to partake in this. For this, I stand on my own moral grounds, basing myself on universal ethical principles, confirmed by fundamental freedoms, by human rights and by the sustainable development goals¹. I object to war. I refuse. Not in my name.

Freedom of conscience is also the right to life: a total refusal to kill. It is also the right to peace: an absolute determination to see conflicts solved peacefully. And to learn to do so: solve conflicts peacefully!

Among many, conscientious objectors are the lifeblood of peace. They are among the ones that show, outwardly, giving of themselves, the absurdity, the horrendous nature of war – its heartless consequences.

If treated right, conscientious objectors become champions of peace. Mistreating them would be like mistreating one's own mother. I quote Friedrich Durrenmatt: « It is not war, it is peace the mother of all things: war comes out of an un-mastered peace. Peace: this is the problem we must solve [now] »².

Finland, please, free conscientious objectors.
Give them the peace they demand and put them to work, peace work: preventive, non-violent, non-conflictive or using peaceful settlement of disputes.
Finland, Please.

Merci, Monsieur le Vice-Président.

¹ SDGs 4.7 for the contents of education, 16 for peaceful and inclusive societies, 17 for partnerships for the SDG.

² Friederich Dürrenmatt, 22.11.1990, discourse for Vaclav Havel, recipient of the Gottlieb Duttweiler prize, Zürich, translated from German, ed. Zoé, 1990, p. 18.