

...that in South Korea, around 800 Jehovah's Witness men are currently imprisoned for refusing compulsory military service and an estimated 500 new conscientious objectors are jailed each year.

Since 1960, more than 12,000 Jehovah's Witness members and other conscientious objectors have served eighteen month sentences for violating South Korea's Military Service Act (MSA), which requires all 19 to 35 year old Korean men to serve a two year military commitment.

Because of their criminal record, conscientious objectors are not allowed to enter a government office and apply for any type of national certification exam. South Korea's Supreme Court, Constitutional Court and the National Human Rights Committee have recommended an alternative service system. However, given rising military tensions with its neighbor North Korea, the Administration of current President Lee Myung-bak has not provided MSA exemptions for either clergy or conscientious objectors.

The UN Human Rights Council, and its predecessor the UN Human Rights Commission, repeatedly have recognized "the right of everyone to have conscientious objection to military service as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as laid down in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." As recently as July 2012, the UN Human Rights Council called on all states to review their laws, policies and practices relating to conscientious objection to military service. The European Court of Human Rights also has found that the failure to recognize conscientious objection violates the European Convention's guarantee of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief.

Jehovah's Witnesses and other individuals who object, based on conscience or religion, to compulsory military service are also imprisoned in Eritrea, Turkmenistan, Belarus, Singapore, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.