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| “PEOPLE WHO DOn’t take up arms”  By  HWANTAE KIM |
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FAde In:

This project was propelled in 2003 as a private assistance project of the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea, but it is clarified that ‘it does not represent the official opinion of the National Human Rights Commission’

#1.December 17, 2001

official of Military Manpower AdministrationDialogue

Official of solidarity

Mother

Minister of Wolgok Church

Jin Woo Chung

Scene description

official of Military Manpower AdministrationDialogue

Why are you causing all this fuss when it’s your enlistment day today?

Official of solidarity

Mr. Tae Yang Oh isn’t simply rejecting his military service, as he respects the current (military service) system…However, he is aiming to making a sincere approach towards the matter (conscientious objection of military service) based on his personal conscience.

Military Manpower Administration

What’s there to think about? If he avoids military service, then it is military service objection.

Mother

It makes me sad… What’s there to brag about, he’s not going to the army. Haha. Someone who goes against the national law doesn’t have anything to show off. He might end up in prison…

Minkanhyup Human Rights Group Thursday Assembly

Jin Woo Chung

‘Love your neighbour like yourself.’ I am a minister myself and I completely believe in this command, so while they are pushing through in order to keep their conscience, build peace, and observe the truth, I acted as if I was blind and deaf and pointed my finger at them as I did not bother to earnestly listen to their voices. I can’t express in words how ashamed and miserable I feel about myself… We threw all those promising young men into prison, and what did we get out of it…

#2.Discussion

conservative Youth Group

Yoon Ho Lee

Solidarity For Peace & Human Rights

Yong Wook Chung

Chung-Ang University School of Law

Jae Sung Ho

Seoul National University School of Law

Kuk Cho

Freedom Alliance

Nam Hyun Cho

Free-lancer

Jung Kwon Jin

Scene description

Yoon Ho Lee

Others all serve in the army regardless of personal preference, either for or against their own will. How can they do that if they really do have a conscience? Military service incentive was abolished and you get the weird look from women after returning from military service. Your brain fogs up, and you rot in the army. There’s nothing good about going to the army. But then, how about them? They are just trying to have it easy. What’s so special about them that they deserve the special advantage?

Yong Wook Chung

Conscience isn’t a concept that simply involves traditional values or personal ethical values. Instead, it is also a way of expressing personal perspectives, opinions, and claims as upright and mature citizens in the society…

Jae Sung Ho

When our conscience stays in our hearts, inwardly within us, then it is absolutely assured… However, if it is expressed in the outside world and specified into actions, then the law could impose limitation in case it is needed for the national security objectives, maintenance of order, or public justice as it is stated in Article 37 of the Constitutional Law.

Kuk Cho

Should revealing our conscience externally lead to punishment without question? I don’t think so. We are in a democratic state. Is it right for people to not get punished if they have a conscience in their hearts, but punished if it is revealed to the society? That’s not it. If people disclose it, then different conditions should be verified and the system should be built towards ensuring their right to speak out about their conscience, as much as possible. That is what democracy represents.

Nam Hyun Cho

Well. If that is their decision due to their religious beliefs, then I am not sure what the problem is. If I have to go to prison because of my beliefs or my philosophy, then I don’t mind spending a couple of years… I think it would just be accepted as the creed of a truth-seeker. I have no idea why this causes a problem. Really, why…

Jung Kwon Jin

It means that obligatory military service makes it possible for individuals to be recognised as intact citizens in many cases. It is a very old-fashioned view. I suppose it is fine for people to think that way in a subjective point of view but the problem is that people are insisting it on, you know, others. It means sending totally normal people to prison and giving them a hard time. I call this violence.

#3.March 24, 2003

Objector

Tae Yang Oh

objector

Tae Hoon Lim

Objector

Hokeun Yoo

Participant1

Participant2

Scene description: Activist of solidarity for university students, Non-restraint investigation was decided for Mr. Tae Yang Oh and he was present in the meeting.

Tae Yang Oh

Conscience that deviates from the standard regulated by the nation or personal opinions are considered abnormal or turned into criminal acts, so even if the conscription system is valid in the present situation, the conscription system without an alternative service system is actually extremely inhumane…

Tae Hoon Lim

I am homosexual and coming out as gay made things more complicated. It is because the Department of National Defense in our country doesn’t accept homosexual in the army. That’s why I even thought, “Shit, should I just not go? I could just get a medical certificate from a psychiatrist.” But then, my conscience kicks in again… It’s because we claim that this isn’t a mental disease and, after all, it’s not a mental illness … Personally, it really terrifies me… I am very carefree, so if I get locked up somewhere, then they will cage me in a solitary room because I am gay… Haha. How big is that space? 2.48 ㎡? Imagine how I would fit my humongous self in that tiny space? It would be like caging a bear…

Hokeun Yoo

The reason why I haven’t gone to the army is because I was a part of a unification movement when I was a student…You know, there is a rallying cry, “You can’t point your gun at your own people.” That phrase had a strong impact on me ever since I was in lower grade … I personally wanted to enter a defense industry so that I could get treated as an exception and not have to serve in the army, but I was very hesitant about that as well. Whenever I was studying off books, I had questions about why I was studying about the field and ended up doing other things….Regarding the issue with military service, I feel that way from a nationalistic viewpoint and even personally, I tend to reject the inhumane structure that individuals have to face in the military. It may be a personal attribute, but I am hoping that those conditions can be guaranteed…

Participant1

I am a woman, and the country doesn’t want me in the army, but I oppose to the mechanism that everyone has to be dragged into the army even if they don’t want to, and I believe this (conscientious objection) must be approved in order to ensure the rights of women, like me. That is why I am a part of this movement (for conscientious objection).. I hope we can all carefully think about this issue together.

Participant2

There seemed to be many people who didn’t know about it. They asked if I was going to jail instead of the army. Hahaha. Can you believe it? I asked if they would if they were in my place. I actually don’t know… There are many who don’t even know that there is something like this (conscientious objection). I feel like I have to make it known to them.

All together

(Sing) Let’s go together hand in hand, run between the fields and up the mountains. Here we go, with the “Uhgiyeocha” cheer.

#4.July 17, 2002

One-man demonstration on Constitution Day

Citizen

Hokeun Yoo

Korean Veterans Association

Chang In Chung

Korean Studies, University of Oslo

Noja Pak

Scene description

On the Street

Citizen

So, what you are saying is, you want to be given the right of conscientious objection?

Hokeun Yoo

Yes, that’s right.

Citizen

Then, who protects the country?

Hokeun Yoo

Before going any further, the Constitution Law states the freedom of conscience,,,

Citizen

Wait a minute. Well, you denied your country and the military…

Hokeun Yoo

I didn’t deny everything. In case of other countries…

Citizen

No, no. That’s not what I mean. Sir, then how are we supposed to protect our nation?

Hokeun Yoo

I am not denying the fact that soldiers are needed to protect our country.

Citizen

Yes.

Hokeun Yoo

However, foreign countries are granting the right of conscientious objection for those who don’t take up arms. That is the freedom of conscience assured in the Constitutional Law…

Citizen

No no, listen. This is how I see it. Other people are risking their lives to service in the army, I mean taking up arms means giving one’s life? But then, you are not willing to give your life for your country, isn’t that it?

Hokeun Yoo

That is why I said that I am not refusing the fact that our country needs soldiers.

Citizen

Oh please, do some research on it. You’re not willing to do it, but you expect others to…. What’s up with that?

Interview

Chang In Chung

South Korea is currently threatened by the military dictatorship of North Korea that functions based on a completely different political system. They have developed long-range guns and nuclear weapons so they are always preparing for war with the determination to invade South Korea anytime.

Noja Pak

By applying the so-called myth of ‘threats by North Korea,’ most use it to control the lower classes as well as the obedience to authority and unity spirit of the general public. In other words, it is used for the public. It’s not really a confrontation. And, people have to be reminded about that. Conscientious objection first started in England during World War 1 and that was during an actual war, not just a confrontation. Still, those who wanted to refuse did what they had to do.

#5. October 8, 2002 News

President Dae-jung Kim said

Solid security is the foundation of peace! It not only goes against the constitutionality of citizens’ obligatory contribution, and it is absolutely unacceptable, given that 700,000 young people are putting their lives at risk to make a sacrifice for our country.

Korean Veterans Association

Chang In Chung

The Hankyoreh

Shin Yoon Dong Wook

Chung-Ang University School of Law

Jae Sung Ho

Free-lancer

Jung Kwon Jin

Freedom Alliance

Nam Hyun Cho

Seoul National University School of Law

Kuk Cho

Scene Description

Chang In Chung

When we use the term ‘alternative,’ we signify another measure that can be applied to achieve the same objective. In terms of the obligation to serve in the army, it is to defend our country so it is taking part in specifically building military power that can defeat the enemy’s invasion through engagement in battles. However, the alternative service system claimed by the conscientious objectors cannot replace military service, so it is simply evading military service…

Shin Yoon Dong Wook

Military service is not simply about taking up arm. Instead, adding to the force to construct a safety network in the society was interpreted as a form of military service, and conscientious objectors are hoping to work for the peace and safety of the Korean society in a different form. In that sense, alternative service system is not completely turning away from military service, if they serve with alternative service…

Jae Sung Ho

If everyone chooses the alternative service system instead of serving in the army, then everyone will end up leaving. So then, how can the military be sustained while 500,000 out of 650,000 are soldiers?

Jung Kwon Jin

Just because conscientious objection is permitted, it’s not going to make 400,000 to 500,000 people, or even 100,000, no, not even 50,000 out of the 600,000 to try and refuse serving in the army.

Nam Hyun Cho

Let’s say that alternative service is 4 years for those who refuse to serve in the army due to conscientious objection. Then, there are many who would choose to serve for 4 years. .. For instance, imagine being locked up somewhere for a year. Wouldn’t you rather be free for 2 years even if you don’t get paid? Which of the two would you choose? What would be your choice? Keep in mind that the army in South Korea is where you could even possibly die. In that sense, wouldn’t that expand the evasion of military service…

Kuk Cho

Not going to the army doesn’t mean that they will do nothing and just play. It means that they will serve with alternative service that corresponds to military service. It only involves not taking up arms. For example, if people do things that are related to the social net such as helping unfortunate children or volunteering in prison, then there is a very low risk for people to evade military service. The focus is to recognise conscientious objection while cutting off the excuses to evade military service under the title of conscientious objection. To cut off those excuses, the duration of alternative service, types of service, quality, and details should be defined clearly, and then evasion of military service will no longer be an issue.

FAde Out:

the end