

Complaint submitted to the BBC on 20/04/2023

Case number CAS-7522274-Y1X4Q8

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“YOUR COMPLAINT:

Underreporting of systemic human rights violations

In the past year of reporting on the Ukraine war, to the best of my knowledge, the BBC has not once reported on the fact that male-only conscription and the denial of men's right to leave Ukraine constitute human rights violations, in any event under the International Covenant on Civil Rights and Political Rights (ICCPR, [bit.ly/3XTwNI4](https://bit.ly/3XTwNI4)), to which both the UK and Ukraine are signatories.

Art. 2.1 of the ICCPR prohibits discrimination based on sex. Art. 12.2 extends to all persons the right to leave any country, including their own. It may be argued that these provisions may be waived by Ukraine, since Ukraine is in a state of war. Art 4.1 states that it is indeed possible for states to derogate from the provisions of the ICCPR if the very existence of the state is threatened. Hence, Ukraine may derogate from Art. 12.2 by restricting citizens from leaving the country. However, Art. 4.1 also states that if a country does derogate from the provisions of the ICCPR because its very existence is threatened it may only do so provided this does not involve discrimination based on sex.

In terms of the ICCPR, Ukraine violates the human rights of men by enforcing discriminatory male-only conscription. Either all citizens must be subject to the draft irrespective of sex/gender, or none should be conscripted. Either all citizens should be refused the right to leave the country, irrespective of sex, or no restrictions should be placed on any citizens to do so. Both men and women are free to volunteer to join the military, but only men are compelled to do so.

Furthermore, male-only conscription subjects men, on the basis of their sex/gender, as involuntary perpetrators or victims, to the violence of war, resulting often in death, injury or trauma. It is a form of institutionalised gender-based violence on a mass scale and should be acknowledged as such by the BBC.

What applies to Ukraine also applies to Russia.

The BBC has been silent on this abuse of men's human rights.”

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**The BBC's reply (06/05/2023):**

"Thank you for contacting us about BBC News.

We know that not everyone will agree with our choices on which stories to cover, or the order in which they appear. Our news editors make these complex decisions, based on the editorial merit of all the stories at hand. We accept that not everyone will agree with each decision.

We appreciate the feedback that our audience gives us when it's felt a story has been overlooked - it too can inform our ongoing work.

Suggestions for stories to consider can be made via text, social media or email and these details are included in the link below:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10725415>

All complaints are sent to senior management, and we've included your points in our overnight report.

These reports are among the most widely read sources of feedback in the company and ensure that your concerns have been seen by the right people quickly. This helps inform their decisions about current and future content.

Thanks again for getting in touch."

## To which I replied on 08/05/2023

Unfortunately, I find the response of the BBC to my complaint to be wholly inadequate for the following reasons.

- the BBC has failed to acknowledge that male-only conscription violates the fundamental human rights of men in Ukraine under applicable international law;
- the BBC has failed to acknowledge that inflicting conscription on men solely on the basis of their sex/gender is a form of institutionalised gender-based violence;
- the BBC has failed to acknowledge that denying only men the right to leave Ukraine is discriminatory, a breach of international law and a breach of men's human rights;
- the BBC has failed to acknowledge that its silence on this issue has perpetuated and is perpetuating a view that the violence of war can be inflicted solely men in the form of conscription and therefore normalises the link between violence and masculinity;
- the BBC has failed to acknowledge that in a year in which it has rightly paid considerable attention to the violation of the human rights of women (for instance, in Iran) and gender-based violence against women and girls it has failed to pay attention to the violation of men's rights in Ukraine (and Russia) and their right not to be subjected to the gender-based violence of male-only conscription (which is also in contravention of Article 9 of the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists <https://www.ifj.org/who/rules-and-policy/global-charter-of-ethics-for-journalists>).

Informing producers and editors of the main points of my complaint is not a recognition of these issues, nor does it commit the BBC to upholding the human rights of men in the future by ensuring balanced and adequate reporting on the violation of men's fundamental human rights. After all, these are not minor human rights infringements. Hundreds of men are dying each day as a result. In addition, men have been barred from bringing matters relating to the violation of their human rights to the European Court of Human Rights

(<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=003-7274040-9908360&filename=Measures%20taken%20by%20the%20European%20Court%20of%20Human%20Rights%20concerning%20the%20applications%20concerning%20Ukraine.pdf>). “