

61st session of the Commission on Human Rights, April 1, 2005
Item 11g of the agenda
Oral statement made by Pedro Otaduy
Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI)

Mr. Chairman:

I speak on behalf of Conscience and Peace Tax international.

Not only those who commit a crime are criminal, but also those who finance it. With the present tax system we are obliged to finance the massive crimes of war. Guided by our conscience, many of us think that we should witness to that. Therefore we require that our taxes be used for the construction of peace instead of preparing war.

With our organization Conscience and Peace Tax International we have presented ourselves before international institutions to require this right as a fundamental human right directly derived from the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The person we had asked to speak could not come. He is from Colombia, a country that for years lives in a war in which not two but three armies face each other: the governmental army, the guerrilla army and the paramilitary forces. And we should not forget the collaboration of foreign armies.

He would have spoken about the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, a peasant community whose major aspiration is to live in peace, on the fringe of the conflict that keeps them in poverty. In the last years they have suffered various attacks. Some times from one side, some times from the other. Two months ago, Luis Eduardo, member of the community council, was murdered. He was 35 years old. With him seven other persons, among them three children of 11, 6 and 2 years old were also murdered.

Colombia and many other countries are paying a great human and economic cost because of the wars. Many rich countries don't wage war or suffer from them, but do pay for them by their citizens taxes.

The Charter of Nuremberg says that responsible are not only the leaders and organizers of war crimes, but also their accomplices. He who pays is an accomplice, and therefore, responsible. The state, through its taxes, make us accomplices on the death of other human beings.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "*All persons have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*". Resolution 1998/77 of this Commission declares that conditions to respect the right to Conscientious Objection should be established. In Colombia and in many other countries governments refuse to do so. We ask the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion and Belief to urgently investigate all the restrictions imposed on this right in Colombia and any other country.

Conscience and Peace Tax International also asks the High Commissioner on Human Rights that in the preparation of her report on *Best Practices in the Field of Conscientious Objection to Military Service* for the 62nd session, she include an analysis of the presence of those who are conscientious objectors to maintaining the military service through the tax system.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, thanks very much.