



# Movimento Nonviolento

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*Sezione italiana della W.R.I. (War Resisters International - Internazionale dei Resistenti alla Guerra)*

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## Sheliazhenko case, the Nonviolent Movement writes a defense letter: "If Yurii is guilty, so are we"

Yurii Sheliazhenko is a friend of Nonviolence, which condemns war without any exception. We have known Yurii for many years, within the framework of the international meetings we hold as EBCO-BEOC, the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection; and then we met him in Kiev during the ongoing war, where we went to bring humanitarian aid and support the activities of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, which is part of the War Resisters' International (WRI), a world-wide network to which our Italian Nonviolent Movement also belongs.

We can testify that Yurii Sheliazhenko is an honest person, a truth's seeker, a conscientious objector who rejects weapons, violence, lies. He was coherent long before the full-scale invasion that Russia brought to Ukraine, and he is coherent now that the war of aggression has also affected the Ukrainian people.

We are deeply persuaded that Nonviolence is the greatest force humanity has to build a future of justice and freedom for the whole world. We together with Yurii, both Italian Nonviolent Movement and the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, are inspired by the theory and practice of Nonviolence, which we learned from Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King. They showed all peoples that Nonviolence is more effective than violence, that love always wins out over hatred. Fire cannot be extinguished with fire, just as war cannot be eliminated with war. Nonviolence is the alternative to war, building peace by peaceful means.

We are not alone in affirming and putting in actions these ideas. The Preamble of the United Nations states: "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". The Italian Republic Constitution states: "Italy repudiates war as a means of settling international disputes". The Charter of War Resisters' International states: "War is the greatest crime against humanity". And the Ukrainian Constitution also wants to pursue a peaceful foreign policy, recognises the right to conscientious objection to military service and the prohibition of incitement to war. In addition, Ukraine has signed international treaties including the UN Charter, which prescribes the resolution of international conflicts by peaceful means, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protects the human right to refuse to kill even in times of war.

It is clear that Yurii Sheliazhenko did not commit any crime, but simply obeyed the Law of Love that is written in everyone's heart, and the international and governmental laws that want the war to be overcome.

If Yurii Sheliazhenko is guilty of anything for his nonviolent actions of rejecting war, then so are we, and we demand to be indicted with him and to participate in the trial. But we are confident that the Ukrainian and European authorities will recognise the consistency and integrity of Yurii Sheliazhenko's actions, as well as those of all Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian and Italian conscientious objectors, whom we are honoured to represent.

Today is 6 August, the anniversary of the atomic holocaust on the city of Hiroshima in 1945, three days after another massacre in Nagasaki: the two US bombs caused over 200.000 deaths in an instant: a tragedy that must not be repeated. We fully agree with the words of Pope Francis when he went to Japan to pay homage to the victims and said: "Never again war, never again the clash of arms, never again so much suffering... A true peace can only be an unarmed peace".

Peace is unarmed.

**Massimo Mao Valpiana**  
*President*



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Verona, Italy