

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND A CASE STUDY IN RECTIFYING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA

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### ABSTRACT

The Republic of Korea has a long history with a tumultuous period of struggles between the Joseon Dynasty and Japanese Imperial colonization to the subsequent Civil War. Throughout this period the religious movement of Jehovah's Witnesses consistently suffered from a range of human rights abuses due to their refusal to bear arms. This paper will consider the historical context and consistency of Jehovah's Witness' non-violent theology across several countries both during and after the World War II period which has extended through various regimes. It will further discuss the unique perspective in relation to the 70 years of legal and physical persecution perpetrated by several regimes as well as the social stigmas and economic hardships faced by conscientious objectors. It will discuss the development recognition of the need for alternative service on constitutional grounds and the benefit to society as a whole for the adoption of such a program along with criteria that would ensure a fair national system of alternative service for those who qualify. Legal developments in the recognition of the responsibilities of the Republic of Korea as a member state of the United Nations and need for compliance with "freedom of conscience" and "freedom of religion" in accord with the Universal Declaration of Human rights will also be examined.

**Keywords:** Conscientious objection, Jehovah's Witnesses, Human Rights, Refusal to Bear Arms, Pacifism, Korea, Japan.