

## Overview

### Key Points

- British Army Reservist applied for discharge in protest of **UK** role in Gaza genocide, increasing domestic authoritarianism and ongoing complicity in **US**–Israeli crimes against humanity.
- Previous high-profile **conscientious objector (CO)** cases include: Ben Griffin in 2005; Joe Glenton in 2010; Michael Lyons in 2011; and Ahmed al-Batati in 2020 (though not all used the formal **CO** process). Many have experienced jail time for refusing orders to serve contrary to their consciences.
- Conscientious objection remains very rare in the Armed Forces, particularly outside periods of conscription (one source estimates there have been ‘fewer than a hundred or so cases’ since **WWI**<sup>1</sup>). The previous triennial report (2013) of the **Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors (ACCO)**, which hears **CO** appeals, reported only 37 appeals considered between 1970–2010.<sup>2</sup> However, official figures are likely an undercount as evidence exists of objectors being removed through other administrative procedures.
- The Reservist was granted a discharge (recorded as a standard voluntary discharge) with no negative repercussions. **Volunteer Reservists** are able to leave at will (unless actively mobilised), and so figures for how many leave due to reasons of conscience are not available.
- Changes proposed in the Armed Forces Bill 2026 would make former **Volunteer Reservists** liable for recall until age 55, and reduce the threshold for doing so.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the discharge process was smooth in this instance, the point of conflict would be expected to come at the point of refusing such a recall order.
- It is hoped that this step will encourage other serving members of the Armed Forces to follow suit, or at least raise awareness of the option should they one day require it.

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Deakin, ‘Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Britain: Selective Conscientious Objection in the Modern Military’ in Andrea Ellner, Paul Robinson, and David Whetham (eds), *When Soldiers Say No* (Routledge 2016) p 119.

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Defence and **Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors**, *Cabinet Office: Triennial Review Report - Advisory Committee on Conscientious Objectors* (2013) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/triennial-review-of-the-advisory-committee-on-conscientious-objectors-acco-2013>) para 11.

<sup>3</sup>Under the current draft of the bill, all former **Volunteer Reservists** will be liable for recall as is currently the case for former Regulars and commissioned **officers** (Armed Forces HC Bill [2024–26] [3] [AFB 26] cll 33(1)–(4)) and the threshold of will be reduced from ‘national danger, great emergency or attack on the **UK**’ to mere ‘warlike preparations’ (AFB 26, cll 33(5)–(6) & 33(7)); see also Army Strategic Centre, ‘Changes to Recall Liability for **Other Ranks**’ [2026] (ABN 032/2026) (Access restricted) (<https://jive.defencegateway.mod.uk/docs/DOC-1341044>).

On 16 February 2026, I marked a decade of service in the British Army Reserves. I also submitted an application for discharge on the grounds of conscientious objection to continued military service. I was finally discharged on 1 May.

This decision marked the culmination of several threads. Some of these stretch back for years, such as my early decision to serve as a clinician rather than my original (and more obvious) plan of intelligence, principally due to my discomfort at the presence of Turkey in **NATO** and the revelations (and subsequent mistreatments of) Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and other such whistleblowers. Over the years, I also became familiar with the Quakers and other anti-war and leftist groups, and was influenced by each into a position increasingly critical of militarism and the **UK's** role in the world.

These are long-standing issues, and I have always found ways to accommodate and work around them. However, this is no longer possible in light of the **UK** government and military's profound complicity in the Gaza genocide, and continued support for the present regimes of both Israel and the **USA** (my second nation). The **UK** is guilty of supporting both the former's system of apartheid in Palestine, and the illegal terror campaigns of both across the region: from Gaza to Iran to Lebanon. The murder of Hind Rajab and her family in January 2024 marked the breaking point for me. I became much more active outside of the Army, and vocally critical inside it (and learnt I am not the only one disgusted by all this).

For a while, I still felt that remaining inside offered me the best chance of making some meaningful contribution. But as daily horrors have followed daily horrors, military spending has spiked across Europe and proposals to (re)introduce conscription have propagated across the **UK** and elsewhere, I have come to believe that we are in fact in the midst of a Third World War. I believe that there can be no hope of reforming the systems that have allowed these atrocities to take place; only their dismantling and complete replacement. I believe that this corrupt system, which demonstrably places no value on human life, has throughout my lifetime acted to dismantle the hard-won social gains of past generations' struggles, in both our nation and others'. I see that it now seeks to condemn entire populations to fight and die on its behalf; to fight for the architects and beneficiaries of the present system in its death throes, and in service of the harbingers of a far worse one. It must be resisted; they must be defeated.

I have concluded, then, that the last and most important act of military service that I can offer—my means of 'throwing a handful of sand in the gears of genocide', to paraphrase Rasha Abdulhadi—is to use this little-known, somewhat-archaic and infrequently-invoked process now to 'grease the wheels', and then to advocate for others in the military (both current serving personnel and potential future conscripts) to be prepared to do the same.

I have given a lot to the Army over the past decade, and learnt a lot from it in turn. As I light a ten-year career on fire, then, my hope is for the flames to cast some light in these dark times; I fear darker ones are coming.