INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION (IFOR)  
and  
CONSCIENCE AND PEACE TAX INTERNATIONAL (CPTI)  
Submission to the 111th Session of the Human Rights Committee  
MALAWI  
(Military service, conscientious objection and related issues)  
Updated : June 2014  
MALAWI: Basic information  
The former British colony Nyasaland became the UN member state Malawi in 1964.  
Population (November 2013, estimated)  
Military service: Has always been voluntary.  
Conscientious objection: No provision.  
Minimum recruitment age: 18  
Manpower reaching “militarily significant age” in 20103: 183,683  
Armed forces active strength, November 20134: 5,300  
as a percentage of the number of men reaching “military age”: 2.9%  
Military expenditure (US $ equivalent), 20135  
Per capita $3  
As % of GDP 1.4%  
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1 Source: The Military Balance 2014 (International Institute of Strategic Studies, London), which bases its estimate on “demographic statistics taken from the US Census Bureau”.  
2 Source: Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), Louder than words: an agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers, London, September 2012.  
3 Source: CIA World Factbook. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html. The CIA defines “militarily significant age” as 16. However its estimates have not been updated since 2010 and therefore relate to the cohort of the male population reaching 19 (a more common recruitment age in most countries) in 2013. This figure is more meaningful than total population in assessing the comparative impact of military recruitment in different countries.  
4 As quoted by the International Institute of Strategic Studies (London) in The Military Balance 2014  
On its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, on the 21st September 2010, Malawi made the following declaration:

“1. the Minimum age for recruitment for employment in the Defence Force of Malawi is eighteen (18) years. By Virtue of Section 19 (2) of the Defence Force Act of the Laws of Malawi (Number 11 of 2004), which applies Article 3 of the Protocol, a recruiting officer is prohibited from enlisting a person under the age of eighteen (18) years, or over the age of 24 years, into the Defence Force of Malawi;
2. the Protocol is applied by the Republic of Malawi in all areas where an officer of the Defence Force of Malawi is employed and is working;
3. recruitment into the Defence Force of Malawi is genuinely voluntary;
4. recruitment into the Defence Force of Malawi is carried out with the informed consent of each person’s parents or legal guardians;
5. all persons interested to join the Defence Force of Malawi are fully informed of the duties involved in such military service; and
6. all persons interested to join the Defence Force of Malawi provide reliable proof of age prior to acceptance into national military service.”

There is no evidence to indicate any divergence of practice from that indicated in the declaration, both with regard to the voluntary nature of recruitment, and to the recruitment age, although incomplete birth registration records sometimes make the assessment of age more difficult.

In theory, a member of the Malawian armed forces who had joined voluntarily might subsequently develop a conscientious objection, but particularly with regard to the very small size of these forces, it is extremely unlikely that an actual case might make this an urgent issue.

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