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### **Military to study exemptions on religious grounds**

[Taipei Times](#) (24.02.2025) - The Ministry of National Defense (MND) yesterday pledged to study the recommendations of a human rights commission following the prosecution of a man who refused to show up for reserve duty after becoming a Jehovah's Witness.

The ministry's comments came in response to a report the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) published on Thursday on the issue of people being prosecuted for refusing such call-ups on religious grounds.

The commission said its investigation had been prompted by a man, identified by the pseudonym "A," who was baptized as a Jehovah's Witness sometime after completing his mandatory military service.

In keeping with that denomination's opposition to military service, "A" failed to show up when he was called for reserve duty — an act for which he was later prosecuted.

In his trial, "A" was initially sentenced to two months in prison, but the penalty was ultimately suspended for two years on appeal, according to the report.

"A," nevertheless, argued that Taiwan's conscription regulations violate the Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the legislature ratified in 2009.

He filed a complaint to the NHRC in February 2023, prompting the commission to launch an investigation last year that culminated in the report published on Thursday.

In its recommendations, the commission said that while Taiwan has an alternative service option for military conscripts, it lacks such a program for people serving in reserve duty.

To protect the religious freedom of reserve soldiers, the ministry should create a "non-military" reserve duty option for conscientious objectors, as well as a program for reviewing the validity of such claims, the commission said.

A ministry spokesperson yesterday said that the ministry "respects" freedom of religious beliefs and personal conscience, and handles the recruitment of reserve soldiers in accordance with the law.

"Considering that national security is the common responsibility of all citizens, the MND will carefully consider relevant suggestions on balancing national security and personal rights and interests," the ministry said.

In Taiwan, men are typically called up for reserve duty for 5 to 7 days every year, or 14 days every two years, in the 12 years after completing their mandatory military service.

